

ADVENT

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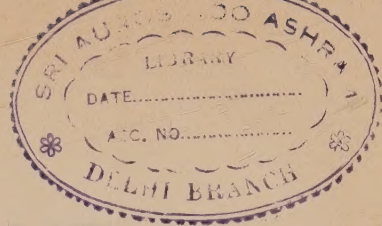
August 1949

*A Quarterly Devoted to the Exposition of
Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Future*



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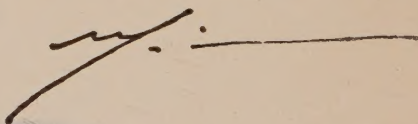


The Advent



You must do the work as an offering to the Divine and take it as part of your Sadhana. In that spirit the nature of the work is of little importance and you can do any work without losing the contact with the inner presence.

12-5-49

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive 'M' followed by a horizontal line.

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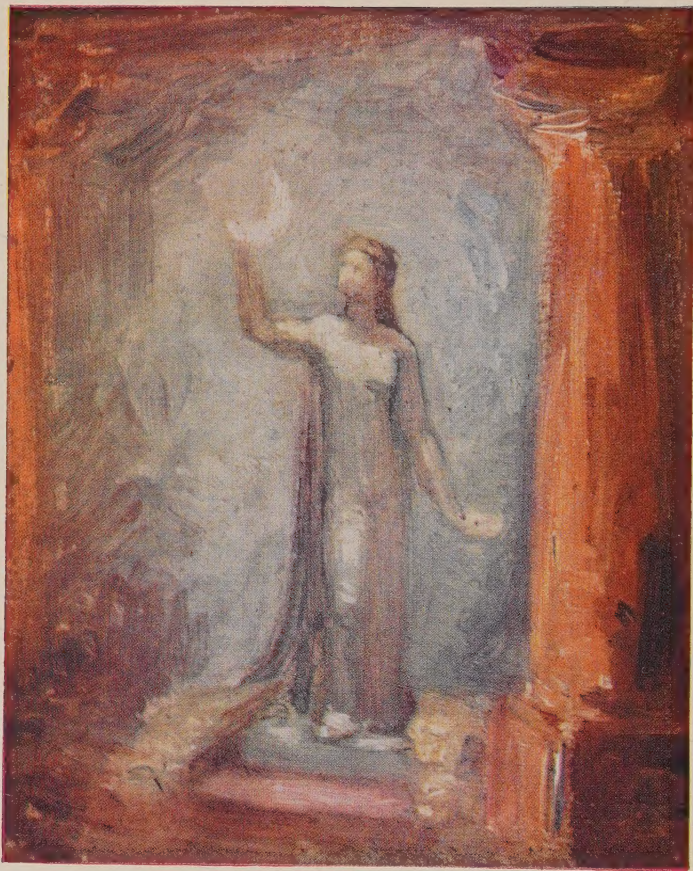
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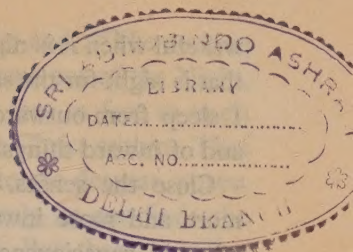
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— A. B.



Apparition

by The Mother



THE ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - Sri Aurobindo.

EDITORIAL

"THE SCALE OF PERFECTION"*

FROM the 20th century back to the 14th is a far cry: a far cry indeed from the modern scientific illumination to mediaeval superstition, from logical positivists and mathematical rationalists to visionary mystics, from Russell and Huxley to Ruysbroeck and Hilton. The mystic lore, the Holy Writ, the mediaeval sage says, echoing almost the very words of the Eastern Masters, "may not be got by study nor through man's travail only, but principally by the grace of the Holy Ghost." As for the men living and moving in the worldly way there are "so mickle din and crying in their heart and vain thoughts and fleshly desires" that it is impossible for them to listen or understand the still small voice. It is the pure soul touched by the Grace that alone "seeth soothfastness of Holy Writ wonderly shewed and opened, above study and travail and reason of man's kindly (i.e. natural) wit."

What is day to us is night to the mystics and what is day to the mystics is night for us. The first thing the mystic asks is to close precisely those doors and windows which we, on the contrary, feel obliged to keep always open in order to know and to live and move. The Gita says: "The sage is

* *The Scale of Perfection*. By Walter Hilton. With an Introduction by Evelyn Underhill. John M. Watkins. London. 1948.

wakeful when it is night for all creatures and when all creatures are wakeful, that is night for the sage." Even so this sage from the West says: "The more I sleep from outward things, the more wakeful am I in knowing of Jhesu and of inward things. I may not wake to Jhesu, but if I sleep to the world."

Close the senses. Turn within. And then go forward, that is to say, more and more inward. In that direction lies your itinerary, the journey of your consciousness. The sense-ridden secular man, who goes by his physical eye, has marked in his own way the steps of his forward march and progress. His knowledge and his power grew as he proceeded in his survey from larger masses of physical objects to their component molecules and from molecules to their component atoms and from atoms once more into electrons and protons or energy-points pure and simple, or otherwise as, in another direction, he extended his gaze from earth to the solar system, from the solar system to other starry systems, to far-off galaxies and from galaxies to spaces beyond. The record of this double-track march to infinity—as perceived or conceived by the physical senses—is marvellous, no doubt. The mystic offers the spectacle of a still more marvellous march to another kind of infinity.

Here is the Augustinian mantra taken as the motto of the Scale of Perfection: We ascend the ascending grades in our heart and we sing the song of ascension.* The journey's end is heavenly Jerusalem, the House of the Lord. The steps of this inner ascension are easily visible, not surely to the outer eye of the sense-burdened man, but to the "ghostly seeing" of the aspirant which is hazy in the beginning but slowly clears as he advances. The first step is the withdrawal from the outer senses and looking and seeing within. "Turn home again in thyself, and hold thee within and beg no more without." The immediate result is a darkness and a restless darkness—it is a painful night. The outer objects of attraction and interest have been discarded, but the inner attachments and passions surge there still. If however one continues and persists, refuses to be drawn out, the turmoil settles down and the darkness begins to thin and wear away. One must not lose heart, one must have patience and perseverance. So when the outward world is no more there and its call also no longer awakes any echo in us, then comes the stage of "restful darkness" or "lightsome darkness". But it is still the dark Night of the soul. The outer light is gone and the inner light is not yet visible: the night, the desert, the great Nought, stretches between these two lights. But the true seeker goes through and

* "Ascendimus ascensiones in corde et cantamus canticum graduum." Confessions of St. Augustine XIII. 9.

comes out of the tunnel. And there is happiness at the end. "The seeking is travailous, but the finding is blissful." When one steps out of the Night, enters into the deepest layer of the being, one stands face to face to one's soul, the very image of God, the perfect God-man, the Christ within. That is the third degree of our inner ascension, the entry into the deepest, purest and happiest state—in which one becomes what he truly is; one finds the Christ there and dwells in love and union with him. But there is still a further step to take, and that is real ascension. For till now it has been a going within, from the outward to the inner and the inmost; now one has to go upward, transcend. Within the body, in life, however deep you may go, even if you find your soul and your union with Jesus whose tabernacle is your soul, still there is bound to remain a shadow of the sinful prison-house; the perfect bliss and purity without any earthly taint, the completeness and the crowning of the purgation and transfiguration can come only when you go beyond, leaving altogether the earthly form and worldly vesture and soar into Heaven itself and be in the company of the Trinity. "Into myself, and after...above myself by overpassing only into Him." At the same time it is pointed out, this mediaeval mystic has the common sense to see that the going in and going above of which one speaks must not be understood in a literal way, it is a figure of speech. The movement of the mystic is psychological—"ghostly", it is said—not physical or carnal.

This spiritual march or progress can also be described as a growing into the likeness of the Lord. His true self, his own image is implanted within us; he is there in the profoundest depth of our being as Jesus, our beloved and our soul rests in him in utmost bliss. We are aware neither of Jesus nor of his spouse, our soul, because of the obsession of the flesh, the turmoil raised by the senses, the blindness of pride and egoism. All that constitutes the first or old Adam, the image of Nought, the body of death which means at bottom the "false misruled love into thyself." This self-love is the mother of sin, is sin itself. What it has to be replaced by is *charity*—that is the true meaning of Christian charity, forgetfulness of self. "What is sin but a wanting and a forbearing of God." And the whole task, the discipline consists in "the shaping of Christ in you, the casting of sin through Christ." Who then is Christ, what is he? This knowledge you get as you advance from your sense-bound perception towards the inner and inmost seeing. As your outer nature gets purified you approach gradually your soul, the scales fall off from your eyes too and you have the knowledge and "ghostly vision." Here too there are three degrees; first you start with faith—the senses can do nothing better than have faith; next you rise to imagination which gives a sort of indirect touch or inkling

of the truth; finally you have the "understanding", the direct vision. "If he first throw it, he shall afterwards through grace feel it, and finally understand it."

It is never possible for man, weak and bound as he is, to reject the thralldom of his flesh, he can never purify himself wholly by his own unaided strength. God in his infinite mercy sent his own son, an emanation created out of his substance—his embodied love—as a human being to suffer along with men and take upon himself the burden of their sins. God the Son lived upon earth as man and died as man. Sin therefore has no longer its final or definitive hold upon mankind. Man has been made potentially free, pure and worthy of salvation. This is the mystery of Christ, of God the Son. But there is a further mystery. Christ not only lived for all men for all time, whether they know him, recognise him or not; but he still lives, he still chooses his beloved and his beloved chooses him, there is a conscious acceptance on either side. This is the function of the Holy Ghost, the redeeming power of Love active in him who accepts it and who is accepted by it, the dynamic Christ Consciousness in the true Christian.

Indeed the kernel of the mystic discipline—and its whole bearing—consists in one and only one principle: to love Jhesu. All roads lead to Rome: all preparations, all trials lead to one realisation, love of God, God as a living person close to us, our friend and lover and master. The Christian mystic speaks almost in the terms of the Gita: rise above your senses, give up your egohood, be meek and humble, it is Jesus within you, who embraces your soul: it is he who does everything for you and in you, give yourself up wholly into his hands. He will deliver you.

The characteristic then of the path is a one-pointed concentration. Great stress is laid upon "oneliness", "onedness": that is to say, a perfect and complete withdrawal from the outside and the world; an unmixed solitude is required for the true experience and realisation to come. "A full forsaking in will of the soul for the love of Him, and a living of the heart to Him. This asks He, for this gave He." The rigorous exclusion, the uncompromising asceticism, the voluntary self-torture, the cruel dark night and the arid desert are necessary conditions that lead to the "onlyness of soul", what another prophet (Isaiah, XXIV, 16) describes as "My privacy to me". In that secreted solitude, the "onlistead"—the graphic language of the author calls it—is found "that dignity and that ghostly fairness which a soul had by kind and shall have by grace." The utter beauty of the soul and its absolute love for her deity within her (which has the fair name of Jhesu), the exclusive concentration of the whole of the being upon one point, the divine core, the manifest Grace of God, justifies the annihilation

of the world and life's manifold existence. Indeed the image of the Beloved is always within, from the beginning to the end. It is that that keeps one up in the terrible struggle with one's nature and the world. The image depends upon the consciousness which we have at the moment, that is to say, upon the stage or the degree we have ascended to. At the outset, when we can only look through the senses, when the flesh is our master, we give the image a crude form and character; but even that helps. Gradually, as we rise, with the clearing of our nature, the image too slowly regains its original and true shape. Finally, in the inmost soul we find Jesus as he truly is: "an unchangeable being, a sovereign might, a sovereign soothfastness, sovereign goodness, a blessed life and endless bliss." Does not the Gita too say: As one approaches Me, so do I appear to him. *Ye yathā mām prapadyante.*

Indeed it would be interesting to compare and contrast the Eastern and Western approach to Divine Love, the Christian and the Vaishnava, for example. Indian spirituality, whatever its outer form or credal formulation, has always a background of utter unity. This unity, again, is threefold or triune and is expressed in those great Upanishadic phrases, *mahāvākyas*, —(1) the transcendental unity: the one alone exists, there is nothing else than the One—*ekamevādvītyam*; (2) the cosmic unity: all existence is one, whatever exists is that One, there are no separate existences: *sarvam khalvidam brahma.....neha nānāsti kiñcana*; (3) That One is I, you too are that One: *so'ham, tatvamasi*; this may be called the individual unity. As I have said, all spiritual experiences in India, of whatever school or line, take for granted or are fundamentally based upon this sense of absolute unity or identity. Schools of dualism or pluralism, who do not apparently admit in their tenets this extreme monism, are still permeated in many ways with that sense and in some form or other take cognizance of the truth of it. The Christian doctrine too says indeed, 'I and my Father in Heaven are one', but this is not identity, but union; besides, the human soul is not admitted into this identity, nor the world soul. The world, we have seen, according to the Christian discipline has to be altogether abandoned, negated, as we go inward and upward towards our spiritual status reflecting the divine image in the divine company. It is a complete rejection, a cutting off and casting away of world and life. One extreme Vedantic path seems to follow a similar line, but there it is not really rejection, but a resolution, not the rejection of what is totally foreign and extraneous, but a resolution of the external into its inner and inmost substance, of the effect into its original cause. Brahman is in the world, Brahman is the world: the world has unrolled itself out of the Brahman—*śṛṣṭi, pravṛtti*—it has to be rolled

back into its cause and substance if it is to regain its pure nature (that is the process of *nivṛtti*). Likewise the individual being in the world, "I", is the transcendent being itself and when it withdraws, it withdraws itself and the whole world with it and merges into the Absolute. Even the Maya of the Mayavadin, although it is viewed as something not inherent in Brahman but superimposed upon Brahman, still, has been accepted as a peculiar power of Brahman itself. The Christian doctrine keeps the individual being separate practically, as an associate or at the most as an image of God. The love for one's neighbour, charity, which the Christian discipline enjoins is one's love for one's kind, because of affinity of nature and quality: it does not dissolve the two into an integral unity and absolute identity, where we love because we are one, because we are the One. The highest culmination of love, the very basis of love, according to the Indian conception, is a transcendence of love, love transmuted into Bliss. The Upanishad says, where one has become the utter unity, who loves whom? To explain further our point we take two examples referred to in the book we are considering. The true Christian, it is said, loves the sinner too, he is permitted to dislike sin, for he has to reject it, but he must separate from sin the sinner and love him. Why? Because the sinner too can change and become his brother in spirit, one loves the sinner because there is the possibility of his changing and becoming a true Christian. It is why the orthodox Christian, even such an enlightened and holy person as this mediaeval Canon, considers the non-Christian, the non-baptised as impure and potentially and fundamentally sinners. That is also why the Church, the physical organisation, is worshipped as Christ's very body and outside the Church lies the pagan world which has neither religion nor true spirituality nor salvation. Of course all this may be symbolic and it is symbolic in a sense. If Christianity is taken to mean true spirituality, and the Church is equated with the collective embodiment of that spirituality, all that is claimed on their behalf stands justified. But that is an ideal, a hypothetical standpoint and can hardly be borne out by facts. However, to come back to our subject, let us now take the second example. Of Christ himself, it is said, he not only did not dislike or had any aversion for Judas, but that he positively loved the traitor with a true and sincere love. He knew that the man would betray him and even when he was betraying and had betrayed, the Son of man continued to love him. It was no make-believe or sham or pretence. It was genuine, as genuine as anything can be. Now, why did he love his enemy? Because, it is said, the enemy is suffered by God to do the misdeed: he has been allowed to test the faith of the faithful, he too has his utility, he too is God's servant. And who knows even a Judas would not change

in the end? Many who come to scoff do remain to pray. But it can be asked, 'Does God love Satan too in the same way?' The Indian conception is different which is basically Vedantic. There is only one reality, one truth which is viewed differently. Whether a thing is considered good or evil or neutral, essentially and truly it is that One and nothing else. God's own self is everywhere and the sage makes no difference between the Brahmin and the cow and the elephant. It is his own self he finds in every person and every object—*sarvabhūtāsthitaṁ yo mām bhajati ekatvamāsthitaḥ*—"he has taken his stand upon oneness and loves Me in all beings." (Gita, VI. 31)

This will elucidate another point of difference between the Christian's and the Vaishnava's love of God, for both are characterised by an extreme intensity and sweetness and exquisiteness of that divine feeling. The Christian's, however, is the union of the soul in its absolute purity and simplicity and "privacy" with her lord and master; the soul is shed here of all earthly vesture and goes innocent and naked into the embrace of her Beloved. The Vaishnava feeling is richer and seems to possess more amplitude; it is more concrete and less ethereal. The Vaishnava in his passionate yearning seeks to carry as it were the whole world with him to his Lord: for he sees and feels Him not only in the inmost chamber of his soul, but meets Him also in and through his senses and in and through the world and its objects around. In psychological terms one can say that the Christian realisation, at its very source, is that of the inmost soul, what we call the "psychic being" pure and simple, referred to in the book we are considering as : "His sweet privy voice.....stirreth thine heart full stilly." Whereas the Vaishnava reaches out to his Lord with his outer heart too aflame with passion; not only his inmost being but his vital being also sought the Divine. This bears upon the occult story of man's spiritual evolution upon earth. The Divine Grace descends from the highest into the deepest and from the deepest to the outer ranges of human nature, so that the whole of it may be illumined and transformed and one day man can embody in his earthly life the integral manifestation of God, the perfect Epiphany. Each religion, each line of spiritual discipline takes up one limb of man—one level or mode of his being and consciousness—purifies it and suffuses it with the spiritual and divine consciousness, so that in the end the whole of man, in his integral living, is recast and remoulded: each discipline is in charge of one thread as it were, all together weave the warp and woof in the evolution of the perfect pattern of a spiritualised and divinised humanity.

The conception of original sin is a cardinal factor in Christian discipline. The consciousness of sinfulness is the very motive-power that drives the aspirant. "Seek tensely," it is said, "sorrow and sigh deep, mourn still,

and stoop low till thine eye water for anguish and for pain." Remorse and grief are necessary attendants; the way of the cross is naturally the calvary strewn with pain and sorrow. It is the very opposite of what is termed the "sunlit path" in spiritual ascension. Christian mystics have made a glorious spectacle of the process of "dying to the world". Evidently all do not go the whole length. There are less gloomy and happier temperaments, like the present one, for example, who show an unusual balance, a sturdy common sense even in the midst of their darkest nights, who have chalked out as much of the sunlit path as is possible in this line. Thus this old-world mystic says: it is true one must see and admit one's sinfulness, the grosser and apparent and more violent ones as well as all the subtle varieties of it that are in you or rise up in you or come from the Enemy. They pursue you till the very end of your journey. Still you need not feel overwhelmed or completely desperate. Once you recognise the sin in you, even the bare fact of recognition means for you half the victory. The mystic says, "It is no sin as thou feelest them." The day Jesus gave himself away on the Cross, since that very day you are free, potentially free from the bondage of sin. Once you give your adherence to Him, the Enemies are rendered powerless. "They tease the soul, but they harm not the soul". Or again, as the mystic graphically phrases it: "This soul is not borne in this image of sin as a sick man, though he feel it; but he beareth it." The best way of dealing with one's enemies is not to struggle and "strive with them." The aspirant, the lover of Jesus, must remember: "He is through grace reformed to the likeness of God ['in the privy substance of his soul within'] though he neither feel it nor see it."

If you are told you are still full of sins and you are not worthy to follow the path, that you must go and work out your sins first, here is your answer: "Go shrive thee better: trow not this saying, for it is false, for thou art shriven. Trust securely that thou art on the way, and thee needeth no ransacking of shirft for that that is passed, hold forth thy way and think on Jerusalem." That is to say, do not be too busy with the difficulties of the moment, but look ahead, as far as possible, fix your attention upon the goal, the intermediate steps will become easy. Jerusalem is another name of the Love of Jesus or the Bliss in Heaven. Grow in this love, your sins will fade away of themselves. "Though thou be thrust in an house with thy body, nevertheless in thine heart, where the stead of love is, thou shouldst be able to have part of that love....." What exquisite utterance, what a deep truth!

Indeed there are one or two points, notes for the guidance of the aspirant, which I would like to mention here for their striking appositeness and simple "soothfastness". First of all with regard to the restless enthusiasm

and eagerness of a novice, here is the advice given: "The fervour is so mickle in outward showing, is not only for mickleness of love that they have; but it is for littleness and weakness of their souls, that they may not bear a little touching of God.....afterward when love hath boiled out all the uncleanness, then is the love clear and standeth still, and then is both the body and the soul mickle more in peace, and yet hath the self soul mickle more love than it had before, though it shew less outward." And again: "without any fervour outward shewed, and the less it thinketh that it loveth or seeth God, the nearer it nigheth" ('it' naturally refers to the soul). The statement is beautifully self-luminous, no explanation is required. Another hurdle that an aspirant has to face often in the passage through the Dark Night is that you are left all alone, that you are deserted by your God, that the Grace no longer favours you. Here is however the truth of the matter: "when I fall down to my frailty, then Grace withdraweth: for my falling is cause thereof, and not his fleeing." In fact the Grace never withdraws, it is we who withdraw and think otherwise. One more difficulty that troubles the beginner especially is with regard to the false light. The being of darkness comes in the form of the angel of light, imitates the tone of the still small voice; how to recognise, how to distinguish the two? the false light, the "feigned sun" is always found "atwixt two black rainy clouds": they are "highing" of oneself and "lowing" of others. When you feel flattered and elated, beware it is the siren voice-tempting you. The true light brings you soothing peace and meekness: the other light brings always a trail of darkness—if you are soothfast and sincere you will discover it if not near you, somewhere at a distance lurking.

The ultimate truth is that God is the sole doer and the best we can do is to let him do freely without let or hindrance. "He that through Grace may see Jhesu, how that He doth all, and himself doth right nought but suffereth Jhesu work in him what him liketh, he is meek." And yet one does not arrive at that condition from the beginning or all at once. "The work is not of the hour nor of a day, but of many days and years." And for a long time one has to take up one's burden and work, cooperate with the Divine working. In the process there is this double movement necessary for the full achievement. "Neither Grace only without full working of a soul that in it is nor working done without grace bringeth a soul to reformingbut that one joined to that other." Mysticism is not all eccentricity and irrationality: on the contrary, sanity seems to be the very character of the higher mysticism. And it is this sanity, and even a happy sense of humour accompanying it, that makes the genuine mystic teacher say: "It is no mastery to me for to say it, but for to do it there is mastery." Amen.

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

I

AN attitude has to be taken in which a decreasing importance has to be attached to the satisfaction of the claims of the lower vital, a certain mastery, *sanyama*, being above any clamour of these things, limiting such things as food to their proper place. The lower has its place, it is not to be crushed or killed, but it has to be changed, "caught hold of by both ends", at the upper end a mastery and control, at the lower end a right use. The main thing is to get rid of attachment and desire; it is then that an entirely right use becomes possible. By what actual steps, in what order, through what processes this mastery of the lower vital shall come depends on the nature, the stress of development, the actual movement of the Yoga.

II

To come to this Yoga merely with the idea of being a superman would be an act of vital egoism which would defeat its own object. Those who put this object in the front of their pre-occupations invariably come to grief, spiritually and otherwise. The aim of this Yoga is, first, to enter into the divine consciousness by merging into it the separative ego (incidentally, in doing so one finds one's true individual self which is not the limited, vain and selfish human ego but a portion of the Divine) and, accordingly, to bring down the supramental consciousness on earth to transform mind, life and body. All else can be only a result of these two aims, not the primary object of the Yoga.

III

It is now one month since you wrote your letter announcing the new favourable turn in your sadhana. You will have had time to see whether the turn was decisive and how far it has moved towards completeness. The test will be whether it gets rid fundamentally of the Asuric turn in your external being. All ambition, pride and vanity must disappear from the thoughts and the feelings. There must be no seeking now or in the future for place, position or prestige, no stipulation for a high seat among the elect, no demand for a special closeness to the Mother, no claim or

assertion of right, no attempt to thrust yourself between her and others, no endeavour to intercept what she is giving to them or to share in it, no imposing of yourself on her or on other sadhakas. All falsehood must be rejected from the speech, thought and action and all ostentation, arrogance and insolence. A simple, quiet and unpretending aspiration to the Truth and reception of it for its own sake and not for any profit it may bring you, a straightforward acceptance of the Mother's will whatever it may be, a complete casting away of all pretensions and pretences, a readiness to obey completely and without reserve and to accept any position and any discipline given are the only condition on which a divine change can be effected in you. It is for this that you must strive.

On our side we await a certain conquest on the material plane which is not yet accomplished, before we can tell you to return. As you yourself saw once, till this is done your stay here would not be helpful to you. When you are ready in your inner condition and things are ready here, then the Mother will call you.

IV

Nothing is more dangerous than the influences of the physical mind trying to build up conclusions upon outward appearances—they have nine chances out of ten of being false. One must learn to distrust hasty conclusions from surface appearances—is not that the first condition of true knowledge?—and learn to see and know things from within.

You ask how to stop these movements? To begin with observe three rules:

(1) Keep always confidence in the Mother's care and love—trust in them and distrust every suggestion, every appearance that seems to contradict.

(2) Reject immediately every feeling, every impulse that makes you draw back from the Mother—from your true relation with her, from inner nearness, from a simple and straightforward confidence in her.

(3) Do not lay too much stress on outward signs—your observation of them may easily mislead you. Keep yourself open to her and feel with your heart,—the inner heart, not the surface vital desire, but the heart of true emotion,—there you are more likely to find her and be always near her in yourself and receive what constantly she is working to give you.

V

The work here is not intended for showing one's capacity or having a position or as a means of physical nearness to the Mother, but as a field

and an opportunity for the Karmayoga part of the integral Yoga, for learning to work in the true Yogic way, dedication through service, practical selflessness, obedience, scrupulousness, discipline, setting the Divine and the Divine's work first and oneself last, harmony, patience, forbearance, etc. When the workers learn these things and cease to be egocentric, as most of you now are, then will come the time for work in which capacity can really be shown, although even then the showing of capacity will be an incident and can never be the main consideration or the object of divine work.

VI

He should carry on his work, and do all things else in the right consciousness, offering all he does to the Mother and keeping in inner touch with her. All work done in that spirit and with that consciousness becomes Karmayoga and can be regarded as part of his sadhana.

VII

Mistakes come from people bringing their ego, their personal feelings (likes and dislikes), their sense of prestige or their convenience, pride, sense of possession, etc. into the work. The right way is to feel that the work is the Mother's, not only yours, but the work of others, and to carry it out in such a spirit that there shall be general harmony. Harmony cannot be brought about by external organisation only, though a more and more perfect external organisation is necessary; inner harmony there must be or else there will always be clash and disorder.

VIII

Here there is nothing that ministers to the human vital nature; the work is small, silent, shut off from the outside world and its circumstances, of value only as a field for spiritual self-culture. If one is governed by the sole spiritual motive and has the spiritual consciousness, one can take joy and interest in this work. Or if, in spite of his human shortcomings, the worker is mainly bent on spiritual progress and self-perfection, then also he can take interest in the work and both feel its utility for the discovery and purification of his egoistic mental and vital and physical nature and take joy in it as a service of the Divine.

IX

You need not have qualms about the time you give to action and creative work. Those who have an expansive creative vital or a vital made for action are usually at their best when the vital is not held back from its movement and they can develop faster by it than by introspective meditation. All that is needed is that the action should be dedicated so that they may grow by it more and more prepared to feel and follow the Divine Force when it moves them. It is a mistake to think that to live in introspective meditation all the time is invariably the best or the only way of Yoga.

X

Men usually work and carry on their affairs from the ordinary motives of the vital being, need, desire of wealth or success or position or power or fame or the push to activity and the pleasure of manifesting their capacities, and they succeed or fail according to their capability, power of work and the good or bad fortune which is the result of their nature and their Karma. When one takes up the Yoga and wishes to consecrate one's life to the Divine, these ordinary motives of the vital being have no longer their full and free play; they have to be replaced by another, a mainly psychic and spiritual motive, which will enable the sadhaka to work with the same force as before, no longer for himself, but for the Divine. If the ordinary vital motives or vital force can no longer act freely and yet are not replaced by something else, then the push or force put into the work may decline or the power to command success may no longer be there. For the sincere sadhaka the difficulty can only be temporary; but he has to see the defect in his consciousness or his attitude and to remove it. Then the Divine Power itself will act through him and use his capacity and vital force for its ends. In your case it is the psychic being and a part of the mind that have drawn you to the Yoga and were predisposed to it, but the vital nature or at least a large part of it has not yet put itself into line with the psychic movement. There is not as yet the full and undivided consecration of the active vital nature.

The signs of the consecration of the vital in action are these among others:

The feeling (not merely the idea or the aspiration) that all the life and the work are the Mother's and a strong joy of the vital nature in this consecration and surrender. A consequent calm content and disappearance of egoistic attachment to the work and its personal results, but at the same time a great joy in the work and in the use of the capacities for the divine purpose.

The feeling that the Divine Force is working behind one's actions and leading at every moment.

A persistent faith which no circumstance or event can break. If difficulties occur, they raise not mental doubts or an inert acquiescence, but the firm belief that, with sincere consecration, the Divine Shakti will remove the difficulties, and with this belief a greater turning to her and dependence on her for that purpose. When there is full faith and consecration, there comes also a receptivity to the Force which makes one do the right thing and take the right means and then circumstances adapt themselves and the result is visible.

To arrive at this condition the important thing is a persistent aspiration, call and self-offering, and a will to reject all in oneself or around that stands in the way. Difficulties there will always be at the beginning and for as long a time as is necessary for the change; but they are bound to disappear if they are met by a settled faith, will and patience.

XI

The nature of Bhakti is adoration, worship, self-offering to what is greater than oneself; the nature of love is a feeling or a seeking for closeness and union. Self-giving is the character of both; both are necessary in the Yoga and each gets its full force when supported by the other.

XII

Few are those from whom the Grace withdraws, but many are those who withdraw from the Grace.

Sri Anuband

A DEFENCE OF INDIAN CULTURE (5) *

(Continued from the last issue)

THE difficulty of religion and spirituality is to bring home the greatness and uplifting power of the spiritual truth to the natural man whose mind and senses are turned outward towards the external calls of life and its objects and never inwards to the Truth which lies behind them. It is this external vision and attraction which is the essence of what is designated in Indian philosophy the Ignorance. Ancient Indian spirituality recognised that man lives in the Ignorance and has to be led not merely away from it, but through its imperfect indications to the highest knowledge. We live between two worlds, the outward and the inward being, and the majority of men put the whole emphasis of life on the outward, live very strongly in that and very little in the inward existence, while even the choice spirits raised from the grossness of the vital and physical being by the stress of thought and culture do not usually get farther than a strong dwelling on the things of the mind and either a preference for living in them more than in the outward life or an attempt to subject life to the law of intellectual truth, ethical reason and will and aesthetic beauty. But to spiritual knowledge there is a greater thing than the mind and our inmost and real being is not the intellect and the aesthetic, ethical or other mentality, which is only the inner instrument, but the divinity who uses these and the physical instruments, the Spirit. A purely intellectual, ethical and aesthetic culture which does not go back to the inmost truth of the spirit, is still an Ignorance, a relative and superficial knowledge. To make the discovery of our deepest being and the living of the inmost life the aim of existence is therefore the first necessity and sign of a spiritual culture.

This endeavour takes in certain religions the form of a spiritual exclusiveness, as in the Christian discipline whose tendency was to discourage not only the physical and vital way of life, but the intellectual and the aesthetic being and to emphasise as against them a spiritual intuition and experience with a development of the ethcial man as its one mental pre-necessity and preparation. But a spiritual culture so limited,—indian spirituality in its latest phase tended also to a similar force but by no means an identical nature of exclusiveness,—to whatever heights it may rise, however it may

help to purify life or lead to a certain kind of individual salvation, cannot be a complete thing; its exclusiveness imposes on it a certain impotence to deal effectively with all the problems of human existence and lead it to its integral perfection. A wider spiritual culture which recognises, like the antique Indian kind in its purity and fullness, that the Spirit is not only the highest and inmost thing, but all is manifestation and creation of the Spirit, must have a wider outlook and a more embracing range of applicability. Its aim must be to raise not only the few elect, but all men and all life and the whole human being, to spiritualise life, to divinise the entire existence of man, not only in his individual but in his communal being; it must turn all the members of his ignorance into members of the knowledge by a spiritual change, transmute all the instruments of his human into instruments of his divine living. We see that from the beginning the total movement of Indian spirituality is towards this aim, in spite of all the difficulties, imperfections and fluctuations of its evolution, and it is only by an intelligence of this total drift, which sometimes emerges into something like a conscious synthetic clarity, sometimes is dispersed in a multitude of subordinate and special standpoints, that its manifold sides and variations of effort and teaching and discipline receive their full reconciling unity.

The spirit of Indian religion and spiritual culture has been the same throughout the long time of its vigour, but its form has undergone remarkable changes, which when we look rightly into them appear as the results of a logical and inevitable evolution. In its earliest form, that of the Vedic system, it took its outward foundation,—the means by which it sought to mediate between the spirit and the normal human mentality,—on the mind of the physical man whose natural faith is in things physical, the material objects, presences, representations, the external pursuits and aims of life, and whose idea of the Divine can only come through his vision of external Nature and the sense of a superior Power or Powers in its phenomena, in the heaven and earth, father and mother of our being, the sun and moon and stars, its lights and regulators, in dawn and day and night and rain and wind and storm, the oceans and rivers and the forests, all the circumstances and forces of its scene of action, all that vast and mysterious surrounding life of which we are a part and in which the natural heart and mind of the human being feel instinctively through whatever bright or dark or confused figures that there is here some mighty Infinite, one, manifold and mysterious, which takes these forms and manifests itself in these motions. The Vedic religion took this natural sense and feeling of the physical man and the conceptions to which they gave birth, and it sought to lead him through them to the psychical and spiritual truths of

his own being and the being of the cosmos. It recognised that he was right in seeing behind the manifestations of Nature powers and godheads, even though he knew not the inner truth of them, and in offering to them worship and propitiation; for that is the initial way in which his active physical, vital and mental nature approaches the Godhead, as something greater than his own natural self which guides, sustains and directs his life and for help and support in the desires, difficulties, distresses, struggles of his human existence.* It accepted also the form in which early man everywhere expressed his sense of the relation between himself and the godheads of Nature,—the act and ritual of a physical sacrifice. However crude the notions attached to it, this idea of the necessity of sacrifice did express obscurely a first law of being, the interchange between the individual being and the universal powers of the cosmos which supports all the process of life and action of Nature.

But the external or exoteric side of the Vedic religion did not limit itself to this acceptance and regulation of the first religious notions of the natural physical mind. The Vedic Rishis gave a psychical function also to the godheads worshipped by the people; they spoke to them of a higher Truth, Right, Law of which the gods were the guardians, of the necessity of a knowledge and a living according to this Truth and Right and of a home of Immortality to which the soul of man could ascend by the power of Truth and right doing. The people no doubt took these ideas in their most external sense, but they were trained by them to develop their ethical nature, to turn towards some initial development of their psychical being, to conceive the idea of a knowledge and truth other than that of the physical life and to receive a first conception of some greater spiritual reality which was the highest reach of human aspiration. The deeper truth of these things was reserved for the initiates, for those who were ready to understand and practise the inner sense, the esoteric meaning hidden in the Vedic scripture,—for the Veda is full of words which, as the Rishis themselves express it, are secret words that give their inner meaning only to the seer, *kavaye nivacanāni ninyāni vacāmsi*. This is a feature of the ancient sacred hymns which grew obscure to later ages, became a dead tradition and has been entirely ignored by modern scholarship in its laborious attempt to read the hieroglyph of the Vedic symbols. Yet its recognition is essential

* The Gita recognises four kinds of worshippers and God-seekers, the *arthārthī* and *ārta*, those who seek him for the fulfilment of desire and for divine help in the sorrow and suffering of existence, the *jñānsu*, who is moved to seek the Divine in his truth and in that to meet him, and the *jñānī* who has already the truth and endeavours to live in unity with the Spirit.

to a right understanding of almost all the ancient religions; in all or most there was a religion for the common physical man who was held yet unfit for the psychical and spiritual life and a secret of the Mysteries disguised by symbols which was open only to the initiates. This was the origin of the later distinction between the Shudra, the undeveloped physical-minded man and the twice-born, those who were capable of entering into the second birth by initiation and to whom alone the Vedic education was given, and of the prohibition of any reading or teaching of the Veda by the Shudra. But it was the inner meaning, the higher psychical and spiritual truths they contained, which gave to these hymns the name by which they are known, the Veda, the Book of Knowledge. Only by penetrating into the esoteric sense of this worship can we understand the full flowering of the Vedic religion in the Upanishads and in the later evolution of Indian spirituality. It is all there in the seed, preshadowed or even prefigured in the verses of the early seers, and the persistent notion which through every change ascribed the foundation of all our culture to the Rishis, whatever its fabulous forms and mythical ascriptions, reflects the fact of a true initiation and unbroken continuity; it contains a real truth and veils a sound historic tradition.

This inner Vedic religion started by an extension of the psychical conception of the godheads of the Cosmos. Its primary notion was that there are different worlds or planes of being in the universe, a mounting scale of the physical, psychical and spiritual, corresponding to a similar mounting scale of planes or degrees or levels of conscious being in the nature of man. There is a Truth, Right and Law which sustains and governs all these levels of being, but it takes in them different but cognate forms,—as for instance the outer physical light, a higher and inner light which is the vehicle of the mental and physical consciousness and the highest inmost light of spiritual illumination, so that Surya, the Sun-God, is at once the lord of the physical Sun, the giver of the rays of knowledge which illumine the mind, and the soul and power and body of the spiritual illumination, a luminous form of the one and infinite Godhead. All the Vedic godheads, in their external character powers of physical Nature, have in their inner meaning a psychical function and psychological ascriptions and they are all various powers of some one highest Reality, one infinite Existence, *ekam sat*, called often in the Veda "That Truth" or "That One," *tat satyam, tad ekam*. This truth of the Vedic godheads assumes forms which have been wholly misunderstood by those who ascribe to them only their outward physical significance. These gods, who are complete cosmic personalities of the one Existence, form in their combination of powers a universal power of

godhead, *vaiśvadevyam*, and each apart from his special function is one with the others and holds in himself the universal divinity; each god is all the other gods,—an aspect of the Vedic teaching and worship to which a European scholar has given the sounding misnomer, henotheism,—while beyond in the triple Infinite they put on their highest nature and are names of the one nameless Being.

But the power of the Vedic teaching lay in its application to the inner life of man. Man lives in the physical cosmos subject to death and the “much falsehood” of the mortal existence; in order to rise beyond death he has to turn from the falsehood to the Truth, to battle with and to conquer the powers of the Darkness, and this he does by communion with the divine Powers and there aid,—the symbols of the outer sacrifice are for this purpose given in the way of the Mysteries all over the world an inner meaning and represent an inner calling of the gods into the human being, a sacrifice, an intimate interchange, a mutual aid, a communion,—and by a building of the godheads within him, a formation of the universality of the divine nature; for the gods are the guardians and increasers of the Truth, the powers of the Immortal, the son of the infinite Mother, and the way to immortality is the way of the Truth, a journey, an ascent by which there is a growth into the law of the Truth, *ṛtasya panthā*. Man arrives at immortality by breaking beyond the limitations not only of the physical, but of the mental and psychical being into the highest native plane of the Truth which is the foundation of immortality and infinity. On these ideas the Vedic sages built up a psychological and psychic discipline which led beyond itself to the highest spirituality and which contains the whole seed of later Indian Yoga. And they open into and already contain the most characteristic ideas of Indian spirituality, the one Existence who manifests the individual and the universal from his supracosmic being,—so that all these are in their essence of being one and the individual can attain to universality and to a transcendental state,—the one God who presents to us his many forms, names, powers, personalities of Godhead, the distinction between the Knowledge and the Ignorance,* the greater truth of immortal, the comparative falsehood or mixed truth and falsehood of mortal existence, the inward growth of man from the physical through the psychical to the spiritual existence, the conquest of death, the realisable divinity of man, the secret of immortality. This, in an age which we are accustomed to look back to as the childhood of humanity and a period of vigorous barbarism, was the profound psychical and spiritual

*The distinction is already made expressly in the Veda, *citti acitti*.

teaching by which the ancient fathers, *pūrve pitaraḥ*, founded Indian civilisation.

This great beginning was secured in its results by a greater efflorescence. The Upanishads have always been recognised in India as the crown and end of Veda,—Vedānta, and in fact they are so; they are the large crowning outcome of the Vedic discipline and experience. The time in which these Vedantic truths were seen and the Upanishads took shape, was, as we can see from such records as the Chhandogya and Brihadaranyaka, an epoch of immense and strenuous spiritual seeking in which the truths held by the initiates but kept back from ordinary men broke their barriers, swept through all the higher mind of the nation and fertilised the soil of Indian culture for a general growth of spirituality. It was not as yet entirely universal; for it was chiefly men of the higher classes, mainly Kshatriyas and Brahmins trained in the Vedic system of education, who, no longer content with an external truth and the works of the outer sacrifice, began everywhere to seek for the highest word of revealing experience from the sages who possessed the knowledge of the One; but also we find among those who attained to it and became great teachers men of inferior or doubtful birth like Satyakama Jabali, son of a servant-girl who knew not who was his father. The work that was done in this period became the bedrock of Indian spirituality in later ages and from it gush still the life-giving waters of a perennial inspiration. It created the whole difference between the evolution of Indian and of other civilisations. For a time had come when the original Vedic symbols were to lose their significance and pass into obscurity, as did the inner teaching of the Mysteries in other countries. The old poise of culture between the crude or half-trained naturalness of the outer physical man and an inner and secret psychical and spiritual teaching for the initiates could no longer suffice as a basis of spiritual progress: the race in its cycle of civilisation needed a large, a more and more generalised intellectual, ethical and aesthetic evolution to help it to grow into the light, and this was a turn that had to come in India as in other lands. But the danger was that the greater spiritual truth might be lost in the reign and domination of the self-supported intellect and reason. That was what actually happened in the West, Greece leading the way, although the old knowledge was prolonged in a more intellectual form by the Pythagoreans, by Plato and the Neo-Platonists; but still in spite of them and in spite of the spiritual wave which swept over Europe from Asia in an ill-understood Christianity, the whole real trend of Western civilisation has been intellectual, rational, secular and even materialistic, its general aim a culture of the vital and physical man by the power of an intellectualised ethics, aesthesis and

reason. The spiritual truth and the spiritual tendency were saved in India from this collapse by the immense effort of the age of the Upanishads which took up the Vedic truth into its highest and most simple expression of intuition and experience, but yet in a form which could lend itself to intellectual and philosophic statement and appreciation. The result was a great upbuilding of an intellectual, aesthetic, ethical and social culture guided, uplifted and more and more penetrated and suffused by the saving power of spirituality.

The second or post-Vedic age of Indian civilisation, distinguished by the rise of the great philosophies, a vast epic literature, a vigorous and complex society, the beginnings of art and science, the formation of large kingdoms and empires and manifold formative activities of all kinds, great systems of living and thinking, was as elsewhere a high outburst of the intelligence working upon life and the things of the mind to discover their reason and their right way and bring out a broad and noble fullness of human existence. But this effort in India never lost sight of the spiritual motive or the touch of the religious sense. In philosophy the intelligence attempted to analyse by the reason and logical faculty what had formerly been approached through intuition and spiritual experience, but it started from the data these had discovered and went back always in one form or another to the profound truths of the Upanishads which kept their place as the highest authority in these matters,—and this amounted practically to a constant admission by the Indian mind that spiritual experience is a greater thing and a deeper cause of light than the intellectual reason. The epical literature is full of strong and free intellectual and ethical thinking, a criticism of life by the intelligence and the ethical reason, but the background is a constant religious sense and assent to the spiritual truths which remained the basis of the culture and suffused with their higher light secular thought and action. Art dwells much upon life, but its highest achievement is always in the field of the interpretation of the religio-philosophical mind of India and its whole tone is coloured by a suggestion of the spiritual and the infinite. Society develops its communal coordination of the mundane life of interest and desire, *kāma*, *artha*, but governs always its action by a reference at every point to the dharma, which takes the form of a complex practical amplification of the Vedic idea of truth and right action and living, and it never loses sight of spiritual liberation as the highest point and the ultimate aim of the effort of Life. In later times there is a still stronger secular tendency of intellectual culture, science, mundane political and social development, a stressing of an artistic, sensuous, hedonistic experience, but this too always strives to keep itself within the frame and not to lose the special stamp of the Indian

cultural idea and is compensated by a deepening of the intensities of psycho-religious experience, while every excess of emphasis on the splendour and richness, the powers and pleasures of life has its recoil and is balanced by a corresponding potent stress on spiritual asceticism as the higher way. The two trends, the extreme of the richness of life experience and the extreme of a pure intensity of the spiritual life, accompany each other, interact and preserve with whatever loss of the earlier harmony and synthesis the balance of Indian culture.

Indian religion following this line of evolution, kept its inner continuity with its Vedic and Vedantic origins, while it changed entirely its mental contents and colour and its outward basis. This it did not by any religious revolt or revolution, not with any idea of iconoclastic reformation, but by a development of its organic life which resulted in a natural transformation. At one time indeed it seemed as if a discontinuity and sharp new beginning were necessary and would take place; for Buddhism seemed to reject any spiritual continuity with the Vedic religion. But this was after all more in appearance than in reality. The ideal of Nirvana was only a negative and exclusive statement of the highest Vedantic spiritual experience, its ethical system, the eightfold path as the way to release, an austere sublimation of the Vedic notion of the Truth, Right and Law as the way to immortality, its strongest note, universal compassion and fellow-feeling, an ethical application of the spiritual unity which is the essential idea of Vedanta, its characteristic tenets such as Nirvana and Karma could have been justified, if it had chosen, from the utterances of the Brahmanas and Upanishads, and it might have claimed for itself a Vedic origin quite as well as the Sankhya philosophy and discipline with which it had some points of intimate alliance. But what most hurt Buddhism and determined its rejection, was not so much its denial of a Vedic origin or authority, but the exclusive trenchancy of its intellectual, ethical and spiritual positions,—a result of the high stress of the logical and rational mind in which it was born as a separate religion,—which could not in the end be made sufficiently compatible with the flexibility, many-sided susceptibility and syncretical turn of the Indian religious consciousness. Eventually, Indian religion while absorbing all that it could of Buddhism, rejected its exclusive positions and preserved the full line of its own Vedic continuity.

This evolution moved by a gradual fading out of the prominent Vedic forms, a transformation of symbol and ritual and ceremony, an emergence of things that are only hints in the original system, a development of new idea-forms from the seed of the original thinking, a farther widening and fathoming of psychic and spiritual experience. The Vedic gods, though

losing their real significance, at first keep their hold, but are overshadowed by the great Trinity, Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva, afterwards they fade altogether and remain only as a dead tradition; a new pantheon appears which in its outward symbolic aspects expresses a deeper truth and range of religious experience. The Vedic sacrifice persists only in broken and lessening fragments; the house of Fire is replaced by the temple, the karmic ritual of sacrifice transformed into the devotional temple ritual, the mental images of the Vedic gods figured in the mantras by mental forms of the two great deities, Vishnu and Shiva, and their Shaktis and by corresponding physical images which are made the basis both for external worship and for the mantras of inward adoration and meditation, while the psychic and spiritual experience which the inner sense of the Vedic hymns expressed finally disappeared into the psycho-spiritual experience of Puranic and Tantric religion and Yoga. The Purano-Tantric stage of the religion has been decried by European critics and Indian reformers as a degradation of the earlier and purer religion; but this is not so in essential reality, but rather it was an effort successful in a great measure to raise the general mind of the people to a higher and deeper range of spiritual experience. Much of the adverse criticism proceeds upon a total ignoring of the real sense of this worship; much of it is concentrated on accretions and aberrations which could hardly be avoided in an immense widening of the basis of the culture and catholic attempt to draw towards the spiritual truth minds of all classes and qualities. Much indeed was lost of the profound psychic knowledge of the Vedic seers, but much also of new knowledge was developed. And on the whole what we have to see is the essential sense and aim of the development and the intrinsic value of its forms and means and symbols.

When we look at it from this standpoint, we shall see that this evolution follow upon the early Vedic form very much for the same reason as Catholic Christianity replaced the mysteries and sacrifices of the early Pagan religions. The outward basis of the early religion appealed to the physical outward mind and took that as its starting-point; the new evolution appealed to a more inner psychic mind and made it its aim to lead that towards the higher spiritual truth. It provided indeed for the outward physical sense and aesthetic turn by its system of temple worship and numerous ceremonies and physical images, but it gave them also a psychical sense and direction which was open to the ordinary man and not reserved for the elect, the initiates; the initiation now became instead a condition for the introduction from the psycho-religious to the deepest spiritual truth and experience. The Vedic godheads were to the mass of their worshippers divine powers

presiding over the workings of the outward life of the physical cosmos; but the Puranic Trinity had an entirely psycho-religious and spiritual significance and its more external significance, such as the function of cosmic creation, preservation and destruction, was merely a dependent fringe of these profundities. The spiritual truth remained the same, the truth of the One in many aspects,—the Trinity is a triple form of the one supreme Godhead and Brahman, the Shaktis are energies of the one Energy of the highest divine Being,—but this was now brought more powerfully, widely and intensely home to the general mind of the people. Even the so-called henotheism of the Vedic idea was prolonged and heightened in the worship of Vishnu or Shiva as the one Deity, the universal and highest Godhead of whom all others are the forms and powers. The idea of the Divinity in man was popularised, especially the manifestation of the Divine in humanity which was the basis of the worship of the Avatars. The systems of Yoga developed themselves on the same basis and led through psycho-physical and psycho-spiritual methods to a union with the Supreme, One and Divine which is in various forms the aim of all Indian spirituality. The whole of this Purano-Tantric system, if looked at in its totality and real significance and with an intelligent understanding of its forms, is an endeavour to raise man from a basis of generalised psycho-religious experience through knowledge, works and love to a supreme spiritual experience and spiritual status.

This stage is not the highest reach of spiritual or religious evolution. As the Vedic training of the physically-minded man made possible this development, this raising of the basis of religion to the inner psychical mind, so that again by its training of the psychically-minded man ought to make possible a still higher development and a raising of the basis of religion to the spiritual mind itself as the leading power of life. The first stage makes possible the preparation of the natural external man for spirituality; the second takes up his outward life into a deeper mental and psychical living and brings him more directly into contact with the spirit and divinity within him; the third should render him capable of taking up his whole mental, psychical, physical living into a first beginning at least of a generalised spiritual life. This endeavour has manifested itself in the evolution of Indian spirituality and is the significance of the latest philosophies, the great spiritual movements of the saints and bhaktas and an increasing resort to the various paths of Yoga. But unhappily it synchronised with a decline of Indian culture and an increasing collapse of its general power and knowledge, and in these surroundings it could not bear its natural fruit; but at the same time it has done much to prepare

such a possibility in the future. If Indian culture is to survive and keep its spiritual basis and innate character, it is in this direction, and not in a mere revival or prolongation of the Puranic system, that its evolution must turn, rising so towards the fulfilment of that which the Vedic seers saw as the aim of man and his life thousands of years ago and the Vedantic sages cast into the clear and immortal forms of their luminous revelation.

SRI AUROBINDO

INTERDEPENDENT

(A Poem)

RADHA TO KRISHNA:

I HAVE come for thee, O Krishna, leaving
All, all I cherished from birth:
My home and nest and loyalties
An earthling owes to earth.

I have brought for garlands my songs of rapture
Woven on my love's own dream
And for incense my heart-aches which none
But thou, Lord, shall redeem.

Lastly, I bring my self, a present,
To surrender at thy feet,
My King, who weanest me from my world:
Who shall with thee compete?

Behold, I come by thy Flute called,
Alone to the Alone!
And I walk in beauty because 'tis beauty
Mirror thy union.

KRISHNA TO RADHA:

And I, too, have come for thee, O Radha,
 My soul of gleam and grace!
 For I perceived through my heart-beats' rapture
 Thy heart of loveliness.

And so I called to thee, my flawless
 Queen of purity!
 For whom my Flutelet yearned and cried:
 To hark to its echo in thee.

Lastly, I too my self of bliss
 Surrender at thy feet,
 A human artist, because thou thrillst
 My human heart to greet.

Behold, from the heights I come to woo
 Thy love in a mortal Birth
 And I speak through music because 'tis music
 Wafts Heaven's ache for earth.*

15-5-49

DILIP KUMAR ROY

*(The poem is inspired by a letter Sri Aurobindo wrote to me in which he wrote at the end: "As for the question, whether Heaven wants Man, the answer is that if Heaven did not want him he would not want Heaven. It is from Heaven that the longing and aspiration for Immortality have come and it is the Godhead within him that carries it as seed.")

SRI RAMAKRISHNA*

I FEEL that my being allowed to participate thus in today's celebrations is a great grace vouchsafed to me. I am not competent,—certainly I am not worthy,—to talk about Sri Ramakrishna. How much does the bucket understand the well? I am akin to a little bucket, a leaky one at that, drawn to the perennial springs, the oceanic immensity, of Ramakrishna's spirituality. So paramount has been this sense of my essential unworthiness that, although almost daily passing in front of the Ashram and Students' Home, daily glimpsing Sri Ramakrishna's blissful portrait from the road and feeling as a matter of course a sudden unaccountable surge of emotion, I never could—and never did—actually summon courage to enter its precincts,—till at last one evening, about a fortnight back, my friend Dr. Seshadri peremptorily took me in before I could fall a prey to my usual hesitations and enervating indecisions. After meditation and *bhajan*, but before my relapse into the hollow-man-stuffed-man mood of apathy, I had been invited to speak at the time of the forthcoming birthday celebrations, and I had—without thinking what I was doing—agreed to do so. The Swamijis who are here in charge of the Ashram and Students' Home are, after all, the right people to expound the meaning of Sri Ramakrishna's life and mission; and, besides, there are the Words of the Master himself, there are standard biographies and classic expositions, all available in English and in most of our regional languages. What, then, can I say on this occasion,—what is there left for me to say? A special grace has been bestowed upon me, the Hound of Heaven would pursue me—even me—and try to bring me to my senses! That is how I look upon the auspicious accident of my participation in today's celebrations.

We say in our blundering human way that Sri Ramakrishna was born one hundred and thirteen years ago in a village in Bengal—that, having lived in Kali, and having lived for Kali, for the allotted span of fifty years, he passed away about sixty-three years ago. Perhaps these statements have no meaning when applied to such a phenomenon as Sri Ramakrishna. A spark of the Infinite—an Infinity as it were scooped out of Infinity—Sri Ramakrishna has ever been, and Ramakrishna for ever will be. What has he to do with the dualities of birth and death, the variegated play of the

* Substance of a lecture delivered during the 14th Birthday Celebrations at Vizagapatam.

magic of Maya that holds us in fascinating bondage? Nevertheless, being still unescapably human, chained helplessly to the earth-crust, we cannot help thinking in human terms even of such a splendid soul as Sri Ramakrishna. Why had he—an Infinity—to abstract himself from Infinity, crib and cabin himself within an earthly mould;—and why had this to happen in the India—in the Bengal—of the last century? How does blind inconscient or ignorant earth deserve these repeated downpours of the Spirit—Gautama, Jesus, Shankara, Ramanuja, Ramakrishna, Aurobindo? The answer is hinted at in these fine lines from “A God’s Labour”:

He who would bring the heavens here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way.

Coercing my godhead I have come down
Here on the sordid earth,
Ignorant, labouring, human grown
Twixt the gates of death and birth.

There is the further question still: if the manifestation, the incarnation, had to be, why had it to occur in India—why in the Bengal of one hundred years ago? To seek the answer to this second question, we should look back a little at our country’s chequered history, and may be we shall stumble on the answer.

Time was when India was in the vanguard of civilization, achieving feats of architecture and engineering, structuring marvels in poetry and the arts, evolving intricate and satisfying systems of philosophy, perfecting the science of government and empire, rearing human societies on healthy and durable foundations. What were the secret sources of all that energy, all that burst of creative activity, all that record of indubitable achievement? The men and women of those now remote days must have been heir to a great and composite equipment—a powerful and creative intellect, a wholesome insatiable zest for life, and, mediating between them, a pure and profound spirituality that enveloped all thoughts, all actions, all delights, with the colour and halo of the Eternal. In course of time, things suffered a change—the succession of foreign invasions sorely tried our capacity for survival—and the creative intellect came to lose itself in the inanities of petty dialectic, the zest for life seemed to undergo a progressive diminution, the will to live and thrive and make good was hardly in evidence. And

as for the old-world steady luminous fire of spirituality, it was nearly hushed up, all but choked by dogmas, listless formalities, and abstruse abracadabra. The Cross gained a foothold in India; Islam came, Islam remained; empires rose and fell; the merchant-adventurers started founding an Indian empire for Britain. Confusion grew worse confounded in an endless despairing sequence. And so, by the end of the seventeenth century, our national discomfiture was complete. Shah Jehan's imperial Delhi was now a city of terror and iniquity. A pathetic numbness had seized the people. Vitality and the zest for life were very much below par, spirituality glowed—if it glowed at all—in chance fitful embers, and all intellectual activity was nearly at a stand-still. Eighteenth century India was indeed a veritable "Waste Land"—bleak and barren and furrowed and dry:

Gunga was sunken, and the limp leaves
Waited for rain, while the dark clouds
Gathered far distant, over Himavant.
The jungle crouched, humped in silence.

Although it was the Western impact that had completed the seeming disintegration of the country, in the fulness of time it infused into the prostrate body of stricken and paralysed India three needed impulses. "It revived", in Sri Aurobindo's words, "the dormant intellectual and critical impulse; it rehabilitated life and awakened the desire for new creation; it put the reviving Indian spirit face to face with novel conditions and ideals, and the urgent necessity of understanding, assimilating and conquering them." Thanks partly to the pertinacity of the Christian missionaries, partly to the revolutionary fervour of the great Raja Rammohan Roy, and not least thanks to Macaulay's devastating rhetoric, India found herself committed on March 7, 1835—almost exactly a year before Sri Ramakrishna's birth—to a purely Western type of education through the English medium. Macaulay had indeed meant well. And, in the given circumstances, Rammohan Roy and his compatriots could not have easily turned away from the glamour of the conquering West, the glory of advancing science, and the redemptive fire of the shining Cross. Unfortunately, the newly educated Indians of a century ago wildly cantered to the glittering West, abandoning their own deep traditional moorings, with the monstrous result that they were caught in the mid-region of an incredible Trisanku Swarga, strange impossible denizens there, absurd copies of their Western contemporaries! The educated Indian, spurning the lore and the way of his forefathers, made his voice (to quote Professor Radhakrishnan) "an echo, his life a

quotation, his soul a brain, and his free spirit a slave to things". The homely grey bird yearned to be the exotic golden bird, creature of Maya and the careering West, but alas! the grey bird, its feathers untended and therefore stunted in its growth, became not the golden bird for all its mighty striving. Anglicized and denationalized, too brave to regret the lost horizon and too honest to accept the present, the Westernized Indian still aimlessly seasawed between extremes, now flirted with hope, and now wedded despair:

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like these, on earth, I wait forlorn.

It was, all told, an imitative and artificial age, aiming at a meticulous mimicry of the manifold West; and in so far as this sinister process of mimicry was successful, it was, in Sri Aurobindo's stabbing phrase, but "successful suicide."

It was at this truly critical moment in our history, when our very survival as a people with a soul of its own was at stake, that the extraordinary phenomenon of Sri Ramakrishna opportunely occurred in India—occurred in an obscure village in Bengal, within a stone's throw as it were of the city of Calcutta, the most gorgeous and flaunting symbol of our all-out surrender to the West. It was Darkness at Noon—and the supernal Sun that was Ramakrishna was required to dissipate our self-forged black-out, to tear asunder the veils of our ignorance. The Beast of Intellectualism had had an uninterrupted run of a few decades; down with superstition, down with idolatry, down with mysticism, down with religion,—so the Beast had shrieked, and scoured the prospect with the double-edged weapons of rationalism and iconoclasm. The time had come at last for the Beast to be forced into a retreat—to be pursued, to be brought to bay, to be overwhelmed. Descending into clay, treading the dolorous earthly way, the Infinite assumed Ramakrishna's form, took its station at Dakshineshwar, and sounded the bugle call of the Spirit. Poor, obscure, illiterate, unbalanced, insane,—Ramakrishna seemed to be these things; but the crowning Reality surged above the froth and foam of Appearance, and the apparent lie became the incandescent Truth. The potency of Ramakrishna's *brahmatej*, the power of his soul-force, waxed and grew immense into the Hound of Heaven, chasing and capturing the doubting Thomases, the hosts of rationalists, sceptics, iconoclasts and agnostics. In the eloquent words of Sri Aurobindo, "it was when the flower of the educated youth of Calcutta bowed down at the

feet of an illiterate Hindu ascetic, a self-illuminated ecstatic and mystic without a single trace or touch of the alien thought or education upon him, that the battle was won. The going forth of Vivekananda, marked by the Master as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India was awake, not only to survive, but to conquer". The "Waste Land" was now flooded indeed,—flooded and fertilized by the downpour of the Spirit's elemental inexhaustible riches. This, then, was Ramakrishna's divine role—for so we must describe it—in our, and humanity's, unfolding history. He only, he alone, could have wrought that stupendous change in our outlook, he alone could have redeemed the poisoned time, and reclaimed the soul of India, the soul of humanity. There was no fear henceforth that, however we brandished the instruments of logical reason and modern science, we would ever again deny the Spirit, or be divorced from our quintessential heritage; and there was no fear either that humanity would in future altogether swear by materialism even in the terror-haunted atomic age.

Ramakrishna was thus a great affirmation of the Everlasting Yea,—an amazing, dazzling, audacious affirmation that taught us the forgotten alphabet of our spiritual rebirth. Unique among saints, he was a god-intoxicated human in whom divinity and humanity were equally sovereign. The versatility of his Yogic sadhana was as astonishing as the rapidity with which he stormed citadel after citadel of realization was astounding and almost unprecedented. "In the life of Sri Ramakrishna", says Sri Aurobindo, "we see a colossal spiritual capacity first driving straight to the divine realization, taking, as it were, the kingdom of heaven by violence, and then seizing upon one Yogic method after another and extracting the substance out of it with an incredible rapidity, always to return to the heart of the whole matter, the realization and possession of God by the power of love, by the extension of inborn spirituality into various experience and by the spontaneous play of an intuitive knowledge." It was after attaining, by his own internal effort, the central illumination that he "accepted several teachers in the different paths of Yoga, but always showed in the manner and swiftness of his realization that this acceptance was a concession to the general rule by which effective knowledge must be received as by a disciple from a Guru". The last corner turned, the final summit reached, Ramakrishna effected a determined return from the immaculate bliss of the Nirvana of the transcendental Absolute, so that he could forge, in the company of the infinite modes of the universe, their appointed spiritual destiny. Not through miracles—unless it be the miracle of his person, the radiating current of his personality—did Ramakrishna work his spiritual cure and transformation,

but rather through his irresistible appeal to the lotus of the human heart which at once opened out, petal by petal, and in its full splendour dedicated its beauty and joy to the Supreme. In baby-cat fashion, he lifted the weak and gave them strength and assurance. He thought, not in the severe austere categories of sin and virtue, but in the generous humane categories of weakness and strength. He condemned none of the paths to the threshold of Realization, be they circuitous or straight, difficult or easy,—not even back-door or side-door entrances! In essence, all religions were to him valid—though not, perhaps, quite to an equal degree. Many are the winding paths to the sunlit heights of Truth—but Purity and Love are the swiftest of wings to take the *bhakta* to God. And Ramakrishna felt that God were best approached, not as the formless illimitable Absolute, but as the Divine Mother—the “home-of-all womb-of-all”, in Father Hopkins’s pregnant phrase—the marvellous Creatrix of the phenomenal world. And so Kali became for him, not the fearful goddess decked with a garland of skulls, but the Mother, the blessed eternal feminine, friend and beloved and master and God in one.

It is unnecessary to go into further detail regarding Sri Ramakrishna’s terrestrial life—the deathless story of his marriage in the spirit to Sarada Devi—the succession of trances and their after-effects—the parables, so many of them, so homely and so profound—the evolution of his integral all-inclusive system of thought, at once religious, ethical, philosophical and social—the many disciples, with Vivekananda at their head, gathering round the Master as if to a magnet call—the enunciation of the gospel of unity through God-realization—the breaking down of all mental barriers between East and West, between the warring sects and the divided races—the liquidation of the intersecting circumferences and the consequent location of the crucial centre anywhere and everywhere—and the formulation of the nectarean symphony of Love and the manifestation of the ineffable harmony behind all the seeming riot of disorder . . . all this is a highly cherished part of our national history and therefore needs no painstaking recapitulation. One hundred and thirteen years have elapsed since Sri Ramakrishna took a human habitation and name; and today, sixty-three years after his final trance of union and definitive divorce from the flesh, or forty-seven years after the passing away of his great disciple, Swami Vivekananda, we are perhaps able to see these events in their right perspective. The torch that Ramakrishna lighted at Dakshineswar has carried its beams literally to the ends of the world, and his mission is being fulfilled by the band of noble souls who worthily carry his name and spread his message. Bleak as is the present moment, fearful as are the spectres that atomic power

has unleashed over the world, we may yet firmly rely on the reserve squadrons of the Spirit to checkmate and overthrow these regiments of Darkness. India's spiritual reserves are not exhausted yet—on the contrary! Sri Aurobindo, the “last of the great Rishis”, the prophet of the Life Divine, brandishes the “bow of creative energy”, and assures us that mankind shall yet be redeemed and taken to further heights of striving and achievement. So, then, on this festive occasion of the 114th birthday of Sri Ramakrishna, let us lift up our hearts in prayer and thanksgiving, pure in thought and steadfast in resolution; and if we do not waver in our faith and so weaken our endeavour, we need not doubt that all shall yet be well,

All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are infolded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.

K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

THE POSITIVE APPROACH TO SPIRITUALITY *

I

GOD, Light, Freedom, and Immortality are the loftiest aims of man, as well as his innermost aspiration; and throughout the ages his urgent spirit has persistently soared towards these eternal peaks. Yet the present state of humanity only shows how far the modern world has swung from these higher aims and efforts. As though discouraged by the constant attempts of his forebears to reach those greater levels, present man has deliberately chosen to plunge into the depths of an obscurity and a chaos.

And so it would seem; but behind this present trend of apparent degeneration there is in fact a greater purpose, which becomes more evident when we inquire fully into the general movement of Nature herself. Here we can see in the wide sweep of Evolution that there has always been the same principle at work. The clash of opposites, as the challenge for an ultimate reconciliation, has throughout been the fundamental condition whereby a new status of being could arise. It was in this way that the mobility of life-forms had emerged from the static lifelessness of matter, and by the same means that a purposive wilful consciousness had issued from the blind instinctive urge of life. So it would now seem that the Light, which has thus been for man the living symbol of a higher stage beyond, should itself need the darkest Night of obscurity before its dawn can fully emerge into the world of humanity. For it appears, amid the clash and opposition of all the diverse forces which characterise the modern scene, that Nature is indeed straining to take her next major step forward to a new Dawn. Yet above all, we realise that this clash and final accord of opposites is in fact the supreme spur of Nature, through which she progressively achieves, and will achieve, her final evolutionary goal.

It is as well however, in this increasing disorder of mankind, to examine the sources of these ancient aspirations, and to see if we can where the Light really lies. For if in fact the Light is thus the next higher step for humanity, as well as being the immanent reality it appears to be, then it is primarily That which can offer the surest aid and means to lift man, the mental being, out of his ever-thickening darkness. In this endeavour we have fortunately,

* Based on "The Life Divine",

as a basis and a beginning, the already existing records and footprints of man's successive attempts to reach those heights, such as have been preserved in the most ancient writings of India. It is such remains which belong also to the world's most archaic scriptures, and which represent the early dawns of man's awakening to a higher Reality. For when we take a broader survey of human progress, we cannot with the same finality accept our present-day culture as having emerged exclusively from one or two regional zones only; nor can we claim that the development of humanity had progressed as uniformly as is generally supposed from the primitive to the civilised state. It is more likely that many dawns of enlightenment had appeared, even in the midst of a primitive past, and consequently the lines of cultural development which had proceeded therefrom should also be taken into account. This is especially so of the Eastern branches of human knowledge, which have hitherto been all-too rigorously excluded from western thought. Of these, it is particularly the ancient Sanskrit writings of India, with their original spirit faithfully preserved, which are undoubtedly the richest source. For they not only represent the earliest known efforts of man to scale the heights, but they are also the completest existing record of that conscious endeavour. It is significant therefore, in the widening sweep of modern thought, that men are turning more and more to these ancient Indian writings, in their search for long-lost gleams of hidden truths.

When we regard these ancient scriptures of India—particularly the Vedas and the Upanishads—in their natural perspective, it is more apparent that they constitute no alien and irrelevant source of knowledge for modern man, but belong in fact to the very mainspring of his present endeavour. Thus it is no stray coincidence to find that modern science, while clashing with the current western—Judaio-Christian—beliefs concerning God and the world, has discovered principles that were surprisingly revealed to the penetrative insight of a more distant past. For when we examine the substance of those poetic utterances which have been compiled and preserved in the Vedic hymns, we find, though the real meaning is largely veiled from us by a pastoral imagery and symbol peculiar to their own times, that those ancient Aryans clearly discerned the presence of an Immortal in all that is mortal and knew of a secret Nature, not normally visible to our ordinary awareness, which exists both within and behind the material world. That this was no mere poetic fantasy is now being borne out to a great extent by the growing developments of modern science; for it is primarily something of this inner and subtle Nature which science is progressively laying bare, and in so doing is beginning to reveal some of the self-same realities that

were symbolically expressed in the Vedas. It is interesting to note, however, that in general the modern interpreters of these ancient hymns present quite a different case,—perhaps due to the strange imagery that is used in them so that they miss the real key for unveiling their psychological subtleties. Once having grasped the key to these hymns—which was the endeavour to know and seize the Truth in its naked reality*—their whole psychological meaning and import becomes abundantly clear. We can see that the ancients not only knew of an inner nature, but discerned the presence of a higher world of Light and Immortality, which itself finds representation within the soul of man. Thus it was the whole effort and endeavour of the Vedic Seers to bring about a union of the Higher with the lower in which man is, or at least to find a path which would effect this.

It is unfortunate, however, that the current interpretations of the Vedas, which see in them merely pantheism, animism, or at the most an incantation of magical rites, should entirely miss their real inner significance. And even the modern psychological probings into the hidden meanings of their myth and symbol, are so intent on focussing upon the lower regions of mind, that they have only unearthed the racial memories or archetypes—deposits in the subconscious—of what are really higher realities. For the vision of those ancients was in fact a pristine and direct beholding of Truth; not a primitive outlook, but rather a seeing which was as yet unobscured by all the complexity of thought-constructions that characterised a later development of man. In a sense, however, these illuminations are more of an esoteric and individual attainment, the effectivity of which, for their own time at least, could only be disseminated through a prescribed ritual of sacrificial practices. In spite of this, however, the inner truths of the Vedas have been kept alive in a remarkable way throughout the whole history of India's tradition and culture. For when the Vedas were falling into a mechanical ritual of priestly practices, there began to emerge that high conception of Truth and Reality which has been preserved in the older texts of the Upanishads. It was really centuries later, in the medieval period, that these lofty formulations of the Upanishads were submerged by the many diverse schools of philosophical thought which had then begun to develop. By that time also the Vedic texts themselves had become absorbed as the basic scripture of that composite body of religious sects—called Hinduism—which came to characterise India to the world. This medieval religio-philosophical pattern, however, which

* See especially Sri Aurobindo's "Hymns to the Mystic Fire"

straggled on even to the present-day, was too enclosed in itself to give to the world the real spiritual truths it held. It is only perhaps this modern age, in reaching a more global outlook embracing the whole of mankind, which has been given the unique impetus and opening for these universal truths to enter more widely into the life of the world.

When we come to consider the recent trends of science in the light of the ancient knowledge, especially the current investigations into the root of matter, we find that the real significance of these new discoveries is more patently revealed. For instance, in the large-scale experiments on nuclear fission, the forces which constitute the very centre of matter have been discovered to be not the ordinary physical cohesions known to classical science, but rather forces of the same order as those which uphold the whole material universe. The atom itself is thus found to contain the very keystone of the universe—a supra-cosmic Force. This is clear also from the tremendous power that is liberated in the atom-splitting event itself. It was indeed the actualisation of this potent force in all its stark reality which had struck, and for a time at least had stunned, the consciousness of mankind. But when we consider this phenomenon in its wider context, we see that it was these self-same fundamental forces, transcendent and yet inherent within all things, of which the ancient Seers knew and accepted as the basis of the entire Reality. And above all, they recognised that this power belonged to the very nature of the Supreme Reality itself, which they regarded as the one Source of all things. For to the ancients there was always the constant knowledge that behind the many powers and gods invoked to take part in their struggle against the forces of darkness, there is but one Supreme Godhead of which everything is a part or an emanation. Even the gods themselves, though they appeared symbolically through diverse forms and names, were regarded as the delegates of the One Supreme. And similarly the outer world of matter was also seen to be the very manifestation of a divine Force and Energy from which the universe had actually issued. Through this cosmic vision of a supreme Unity and a divine Origin the ancients were able to perceive the Godhead not only encompassing all things, but centrally contained within each as its true essence or soul. Modern man, however, with his excessive zeal for the surface reality, has not yet attained this redeeming knowledge and insight; and it is thus that he finds himself hazardously groping in the dark with a cosmic power in his hands.

In the Upanishads also, since they are the direct lineal descendants of the Vedas, there are similar cogent truths revealed, which are once again being unearthed by modern science. Thus experiment has shown that there is not only an organised movement compressed within the heart of matter

—a replica of a potential universe,—but that an inner fluidity is also there, which is more characteristic of the life-flux. One can now more readily say that an inner life is possibly hidden and compressed within the apparently uncreative mass which we know outwardly as static matter. In the study of living organisms also, plant as well as animal, investigators have pointed to the existence of a rudimentary consciousness already present. Thus plants have been shown to possess certain delicate and sensitive movements which strongly suggest a subtle nervous and circulatory mechanism within them, normally belonging to the more motile animal behaviour. And even amongst the lower forms of animal life we frequently find the display of a foreknowledge, a preparedness of what is to come, which surpasses any connection with a mechanical reflex or reaction to some outside stimulus. It is such innate “knowing” and more purposive movements which hint at the presence of mind, though rudimentary, already inherent in all life. In this way we have the growing evidence of a progressively connected development which runs through the whole evolutionary process. It appears more natural therefore,—even as it was revealed by the Sages of Vedanta*—that Life should have emerged from Matter, and that Mind and a mental being should have evolved out of an amorphous Life, since the rudiments or embryos of the higher stages of Nature’s unfoldment were already present in essence within the lower forms. And there is no reason to believe that the evolutionary movement has ceased with the advent of man. Rather it is more logical to adduce that the essence of a spiritual entity, beyond mind, is already there within him,—the potential centre of a greater Being to which man can thus evolve.

It is now evident that it was precisely because Vedanta had pushed boldly beyond sense-knowledge, that it was enabled to know more directly the inner nature of things. And the modern scientist has in fact hampered his own progress by his excessive attachment to sense-data, so that he cannot explain nor see the wherefore of all the complex phenomena that are now coming to light. In a sense however, experimental science in thus limiting itself to the very surface nature of man as the ultimate criterion, has brought about a greater practical applicability of its results into modern life. But at the same time it is clear that science, thus tied exclusively to the outer Nature, can only advance humanity blindly, rather than give the lead and light the way forward. Its goal of perfecting humanity is thus dependent on the extent of humanity’s own perfection and consciousness. Therefore,

* The term Vedanta is used here only in reference to the original Upanishadic sources, and not to the systems of philosophy, derived from Vedanta, which developed much later.

while utilising science in the development of his outer material life, it is all the more essential for modern man to seize also another order of knowledge; and it is here that Vedanta can find its rightful place in modern life. For through its extensive and thorough delving into the inner realm and the Beyond, and especially in preserving the secret links therewith, Vedanta can now claim to be the chief living source and basis of man's quest for Perfection.

If, however, modern thought and life are to recover and thoroughly absorb this ancient knowledge, it is clear that it must be done through a living experience of it, rather than by a mere compilation or compendium of comparative knowledge. Attempts to thus combine artificially the ancient with the modern trends of thought, even though they may be earnest attempts to produce a synthesis, are not sufficiently rooted in man's actual experience to give the real inner conviction with which alone he can grasp the living thread and make it an intimate part of his whole life and being. And in the same way, attempts to sever this ancient knowledge from its present-day living background, and from the native soil on which it has been nurtured for centuries, must inevitably result in destroying the vital link, essential for its wider penetration into life. For it is an integral penetration, responding to the universal need, that is required; and this now makes the presence of Vedanta in modern thought so highly significant.

N. PEARSON

ON THE SPIRIT AND FORM OF INDIAN ART

ALL life is self-expression, national as well as individual. In one of his poems Tagore speaks of the hunger of self-expression gnawing at the roots of our being. The emergence of the divine light and the removal of the Golden Lid have been major motives of all spiritual seeking, and bespeak the agony of the artist within us. To the Christian the archetype of all human artists is the Christ himself, the Man of Sorrow—the Christ who worked in the most delicate and difficult of mediums, the living flesh. In more philosophical language the impulse to art is the urge in the form to reveal the indwelling spirit.

And if it is true that nations are made by artists and thinkers than by traders and politicians then the self-expression of art is our highest national possession as it is our ultimate individual destiny. As Ananda Coomaraswamy pointed out long back: "I do not believe in any regeneration of the Indian people which cannot find expression in art; any reawakening worth the name *must* so express itself." For obvious reasons the Indian reawakening has been long clouded over by political issues. The time has now come to cure ourselves of this unhappy unbalance, of politics without culture. Politics without culture is apt to be drab and, as we are finding to our dismay, even dishonest. It is an insufficient freedom that does not bring to us the joy of fresh creation. More is needed and art, like mysticism, is the realm of that "more". Our discovery of India will remain incomplete if it does not at the same time include a discovery of the art-forms of India as well.

But Indian art is an intuitive and spiritual art and must be seen with the intuitive and spiritual eyes. This art has been very largely a hieratic aesthetic script of India's spiritual, contemplative and religious experience and to ignore this aspect of it is to fall into total incomprehension or into much misunderstanding. And since the theory of ancient Indian art differs from if it is not superior to that of Graeco-Roman art, the average European often fails to find any significance in it at all. On the other hand the Indian has showed little interest or understanding of the arts of Europe. It is enough to say for the present that the motive of eastern art in general, and Indian art in particular, is revelatory and not imitative. Its highest business is to disclose something of the Self, the Infinite through its living finite symbols, the Divine through his powers. Life is seen in the Self—or in some suggestion of the infinite or of something beyond there is at

least a touch and influence of these things which helps to shape the presentation. A seeing in the self accordingly becomes the characteristic method of the Indian artist and is directly enjoined on him by the canon. *Dhaytva kuryam*, contemplation precedes execution, that briefly is the spirit of this art. According to the traditional doctrine, the divine creation is preceded by the contemplation of God the Creator, and the act of creation is usually described as *sa tapohatapyat*, He created out of the energy of contemplation or concentration.

Thus one may well say that beyond the ordinary cultivation of the aesthetic instinct necessary to all artistic appreciation there is a spiritual insight or culture needed if we are to enter into the whole meaning of Indian creation, otherwise we get only at the surface external things or at the most things only just below the surface. Indian architecture, painting, sculpture are not only intimately one in operation with the central things in Indian philosophy, religion, yoga, culture, but a specially intense expression of their significance. A great oriental work of art does not easily reveal its secret to one who comes to it solely in a mood of aesthetic curiosity or with a considering critical objective mind, still less as a cultivated and interested tourist passing among strange and foreign things; but it has to be seen in the loneliness, in the solitude of one's self, in moments when one is capable of long and deep meditation and as little weighted as possible with the conventions of the material life.

It is sometimes suggested that no qualification or knowledge of and sympathy for Indian mysticism and ideals of life and character is needed for the study of Indian art; that it is sufficient for the student lacking these qualifications, to know only whether he 'likes' or 'dislikes' a given example of Brahmanical or Buddhist art; that such art has no connection with Indian idealistic thought, and that those who trace such a connection are themselves reading the Upanishads into the paintings and sculptures. Is not the opposite view more true, that the understanding of Indian art can only be attained through a realisation of the mental (and social) atmosphere in which it grew?

Such statements, simple enough, continue to bewilder the uninitiate. He thinks, if he thinks at all, Indian art to be conventional and unrealistic, and above all overridden with tradition. The question of tradition is certainly important in considering an art like the Indian. Here we may briefly say that traditional forms are a vital expression of the race mind; to reject them, and expect great art to live on as before, should be to sever the roots of a forest tree, and still look for flowers and fruits upon the branches. We do not achieve growth and development by the sudden rejection of the

past. Bluntly put, the arts of India must retain their Indian spirit (which is capable of infinite variation), or become altogether worthless. Once we prepare to live and think as Indians—which is far from being the case—the question of tradition in art will have solved itself.

By keeping to its roots Indian art will not only help the Indians but also Europe. There have been here and there minds of a fine perception and profound originality who have seen in a return to the ancient and persistent freedom of oriental art, its refusal to be shackled or debased by an imitative realism, its fidelity to the true theory of art as an inspired interpretation of the deeper soul values of existence lifted beyond servitude to the outsides of Nature, the right way to the regeneration and liberation of the aesthetic and creative mind of Europe. We can serve others best by being true to ourselves.

Apart from the role of Indian art in world culture there is its immediate usefulness for our sense of nationhood. There can be no true realisations of political unity until Indian life is again inspired by the unity of national culture. Indian art is the clearest expression of that unity, the unity in diversity as everyone insists. More necessary, therefore, than all the labours of the politicians, is National Education. But thanks to a rootless instruction given in our schools and colleges we have become aliens to our own art, and a phrase like 'the spiritual significance of Indian art' is so often a cover for our want of any real interest or understanding of it. It would need prolonged training, a revolution in taste, and even in one's world-view to recover a right feeling for our arts and to make them a part of our daily life.

But the problem, rather the value of art in education is far from being successfully tackled. Indeed it is not even recognised, and it is quite common to find educated persons, even educationists, confess, with a good deal of bravado, their want of interest in the fine arts. From our universities two arts have been carefully excluded, the fine arts and the finest art, the art of integrated living. So far as we know, Tagore was the first to give art activities their proper place in his culture centre at Santiniketan and it is from there that the idea has spread.

Let us not love art as though it were some luxury goods, or turn it into an art of flattery and hence of inconsequence. Rather should we love it because it is a strange necessity of our nature, a high function of our being, a door for thought to pass from the seen to the unseen, a source of those high dreams and the embodiment of that enduring vision that is to be the Indian nation. It is worthwhile to remember that the national movement that has stirred her deepest life has a deeper significance than one that is

merely political and economic. The best in us is sleeping still. Art will help us to wake from that sleep. The civilization of India standing in the first rank in the three arts as in all things of the mind has proved that the spiritual urge is not, as has been vainly supposed, sterilising to the other activities, but a most powerful force for the manysided development of the human whole. If we want to know and love India we must know and love the aesthetic and symbolic representations of her progressive self-realisation, these many aspects of her one being. If we allow ourselves to be moved by them and follow the inner laws of development that they imply or impose, the splendour of that vision will return upon us and fulfil the incomplete gains of a partial political freedom.

SISIRKUMAR GHOSH

LIGHTS ON THE FUNDAMENTALS*

(Continued from the last issue)

THE SEVENFOLD WORLD¹

21. Because of the triune aspect of the Supreme Lord, the World also is triple, a result of the activity of His Tapas that is Chit-Shakti, Consciousness-Force.²

The triune aspect mentioned here is the Sat-Chit-Ananda spoken of in the previous section. The world is threefold being a product of that triune Oneness. We proceed on the assumption that this creation of the threefold world is a reproduction of the triplicity of the Supreme Lord. Enough has been said that Chit or Chit-Tapas is the dynamic element that effectuates Creation, and it works upon the Substance, the Prakriti or the Essential Being of the Infinite, and sections out this creation which is indeed a reproduction of the original triple Being. It is not and cannot be an exact reproduction, but one that is in-formed in its movement by and represents in a way the original threefold principle of Sat-Chit-Ananda. The Agency that starts and brings out such a Manifestation is the Principle of Chit-Shakti. What then is the triple world that we call this creation?

22. The well-known Bhuh, Bhuvah, Svah, are the terms that denote the triple world that is this creation; this is the Lord's Prakriti, the Essential Nature so formed here by the play of Shakti, the Force³

The three terms are called *Vyāhritis*; they refer to the Earth *bhuh*, the mid-region between the Earth and the Heaven *bhuvah*, and Heaven *svah*. The exact character of these three worlds is stated in the next verse. It is sufficient to note here that Svar in the Veda very often refers to the World

* :तत्त्वप्रभा.

¹ सप्तलोक

² जगतोऽपि त्रिरूपत्वं त्रिरूपत्वात्परेक्षितुः ।

व्यापारात्सिद्धमीशस्य तपश्चिच्छक्तिवाचिनः ॥२१॥

³ भूर्भुवः स्वरिति ख्याता त्रिलोकी स्पष्टिरुच्यते ।

सेयं प्रकृतिरीशस्य क्लृप्ता शक्तिविलासतः ॥२२॥

of Light above the triple world, though the term as the third Vyahriti is applied to the world of Heaven, called *Dyauh* in the Veda. This triple world constitutes the creation, which does not spring from nothing, but issues from the original Substance of Being as a result of the action of the Force upon it. Therefore it must be understood that whatever there is in the World-Creation is the original substance in Essence, whatever shape it may have taken, whatever form it may present to our sense and mind, whatever character it may have developed in the process of modification impressing itself upon our general feeling and stuff of experience. Hence it is stated that it is the Prakriti, the Essential Nature that is formed into this World-Creation by the action of the Force. What is the character of this triple world—not the essential Nature, for that is Sat-Chit-Ananda itself—but its nature in the Manifestation, this creation?

23. The creation of the three divisions of the world is based upon the division of the three qualities, *tamas*, *rajas*, *sattva*, Inertia, Activity and their balancing Calm. These again are the dominant principles of formation in Matter, Life and Mind.*

It was stated previously that the triple world was a manifestation of the Primal Prakriti, which is Sat-Chit-Ananda, not the Prakriti, the Primordial Nature of the Sankhyas, which is by itself an insentient blind thing, *jada*. But in the Manifestation, there is modification of the original substance that brings about a triple form of the world characteristic of the three qualities or modes of Nature. Here we leave aside for the present the three Vedic terms Bhuh, Bhuvah, Svah, that are the names of the worlds already mentioned and use the language of the Sankhyas in regard to the characteristic qualities of the triple world. The Pure Mind is the principle of the third world Svar; it is dominated by the quality of Sattva, a calm that balances the two opposite qualities of inertia and activity, which are the distinctive features of Matter and Life respectively. For Matter, the indubitable field for activity, is by itself blind and inert, and it is life that acts upon it and vivifies it; therefore the quality of Tamas is its main property. Life, *prāna*, is the active principle, the corrective of inertia that is opposed to it and is all action and above it. Matter is *anna*, Life is *prāna*, Mind is *manas*; these three principles, the luminous, the active, and the inactive are the chief qualities that govern the triple creation

* गुणत्रयविभागेन लोकत्रयविभागिनी।

तमोरजस्सत्त्वमूर्तिरन्न-प्राण-मनोमयी ॥२३॥

here. What is the Agency that brings into play the forces of world-formation?

24. This (the creation) is the Purusha's becoming, the Purusha's Tapas that ever looms and is set in the Infinite (Indivisible) sphere of self-developing play.¹

The Agency is indeed Chit-tapas, as has been noted already. Here the idea is put in a different way in order to make it clear that the agency is the agency of the Agent who is the Spirit, Purusha and not an impersonal Force, not the neutral Brahman, the Sat-Chit-Ananda. It is the Purusha's *bhāvana* that is the act of becoming. For the Infinite there is no increase or decrease; but when by the act of Tapas the Purusha delimits himself, the tapas-force increases and grows as it were *brimhatah* in the confines of the delimited sphere, and that is the Purusha's act of becoming. It takes place in the infinitude of being which is the field of play for the Force that develops the various forms of the informing Spirit. Having stated this much by way of reminding that it is not the Impersonal that is at the top and back of becoming or creation, but it is the Person who is the Agent, the text proceeds to say that the three qualities that describe the triple creation do not spring from somewhere capriciously, but have a basis in the ultimate truth of things.

25. This triple world is a reverse formulation of the triple term, Sat-Chit-Ananda, of the Supreme Self.²

The reverse formulation consists in the fact that this world of Matter *anna*, *Bhuh* represents the Sat, the world of Life *prāṇa*, *Bhuvah* is a distorted figure of the Chit-Shakti, the dynamic element in Chit, and the world of Mind *manas*, *Svar*, represents the Chit proper, and for the purpose of this classification carries with it in its essential and higher parts the Ananda. That is why the Upanishad says *satyātma prāṇārāmam, mana ānandam*. We will hear more of this before the section closes. Here it may be asked if it is our own classification or this idea had a fixed place in the ancient scheme in regard to the world systems. This our classification corresponds to and tallies with what is stated in the ancient scriptures, beginning with the Rig Veda. But it is more explicitly stated in the Puranic texts, a reference to which is made here.

¹ बृंहतस्तपसः पुंसो व्यापारो भावना ह्यसौ ।
अखण्डमण्डलाकारपाकलीलाविनिर्मिता ॥२४॥

² सच्चिदानन्दरूपस्य त्रिरूपस्य परात्मनः ।
इदं विपर्ययेणेह बिम्बितं भुवनत्रयम् ॥२५॥

26. In stating the position of the world systems Sage Parashara has spoken to *Shamika* of some secret.¹

This is a reference made to Vishnu Purana which is among the oldest extant Puranas. Though the author of the Purana is Vyasa, as indeed he is of all the Puranas, Parashara is the author here in the sense that he is the instructor who narrates and Shamika receives the instruction and listens to the narrative, just as in the case of Sri Bhagavata the dialogue is between Shuka and Parikshit, though the author of the Purana is another and different from Shuka. What is the secret that Parashara reveals to his listener and pupil?

27-28. Stating the order of the seven worlds beginning with *Bhuh* Earth, he proclaims that the triple world beginning with *Bhuh*, the Earth etc. is created, non-eternal. Jana, Tapas and Satya form the triple world that is not created, Eternal; between the two triple worlds, the created and the uncreated is the world Mahas.²

The Vishnu Purana (II. 7—19,20.) makes mention of the seven worlds of which the first three beginning from the Earth are the created and are non-eternal though they are the triple derivation of the triple Eternal. The triple Eternal world, and its correspondence in the non-eternal and the link, the middle world between the two triples are explicitly stated in the Purana. And these statements remarkably fit in with the scheme of the Cosmic ladder i.e. of the system of seven worlds variously constituted, but governed by a co-ordinating principle ultimately as well as primarily by the Supreme Intelligence, which we call Consciousness *chit*. What is the triple world Eternal, and what also that world which lies between the Eternal and the non-eternal triple worlds?

The upper three worlds rising in order from Jana, through Tapas to Satya are the eternal three of which the lower three *Bhuh*, *Bhuvah* and *Svah* are the counter-parts in this created existence. Between the two triples is the world of Mahas. The following verses clearly state the character of these worlds and their corresponding principles in the cosmic constitution.

1 पराशरेण मुनिना शमीकाय निबोधिते ।

लोकसंस्थानसङ्ख्याने रहस्यं किञ्चिदीरितम् ॥२६॥

2 भूरादिसप्तलोकानां संस्थानं वर्णयन्मुनिः ।

भूरादिलोकत्रितयमनित्यं कृतकं जगौ ॥२७॥

जनस्तपस्तथा सत्यमिति चाकृतकत्रयम् ।

महर्लोकं तयोर्मध्ये कृताकृतकयोर्द्वयोः ॥२८॥

29. Of these seven worlds, there are three that are eternal. Of Delight *ānanda*, all beings are born; hence Ananda is called Jana.¹

The verse does not require elucidation. The point to be noted is that the Ananda is the Soul-principle of Jana Loka. The latter is so called because all birth whether of beings or worlds is possible because of Delight, Ananda which by its very nature and substance is full and flows out as it were, in self-creation, the same as self-manifestation. Thus Jana is the first world in ascending order of the Eternal triple. The noteworthy fact here is the equation of the Jana Loka to the principle of Delight in the triple formula.

30. Consciousness having the aspect of Force, Consciousness-Force is called the Tapas, while Atman, the Sat, Existence, is the world of Satya in the view of the Wise.²

Above the Jana Loka is the *Tapoloka* which constitutes the principle of Chit Tapas in the formula of the world-system. That Tapas is the same as Consciousness-Force, Chit-shakti, has been already explained. Above this in the world-order is the Satya-loka, the Truth-world, of which the sole self-existent principle is Sat, that is the Truth, Satyam, the Self, Atman above all, at the summit of the series of the worlds and beyond them.

31. Those who know the fundamental principles of the Supreme know that One to be Sat-Chit-Ananda. Those who know the position of the World system (and its truth) know that One to be Jana, Tapas and Satya.³

When we speak of the principles of the Supreme Existence, we mentally comprehend it as Sat-Chit-Ananda. But the same when approached for realisation through the Manifestation presents a larger and vaster view of itself, intense in the world of its self-delight, forceful and immensely exalted in the vistas of worlds in the Consciousness, and Ineffable and Supreme in the Sole Self-existent limitless world of Being. Thus the threefold principle is equated to the threefold Eternal world.

¹ सप्तस्वेतेषु लोकेषु नित्यलोकास्त्रयः स्मृताः ।

आनन्दाज्जन्म भूतानां आनन्दो जन उच्यते ॥२९॥

² चितेश्च शक्तिरूपत्वाच्चिच्छक्तिस्तप इष्यते ।

सन्नेवात्मा सत्यलोक इति बोध्यं सतां मतम् ॥३०॥

³ तमेकं सच्चिदानन्दं परतत्त्वविदो विदुः ।

जनस्तपस्सत्यमिति लोकसंस्थानवेदिनः ॥३१॥

32. Between this trinity of Earth *bhuh*, etc. and the higher triple world, is the Link-world, Mahas, called the fourth, *turiya*, by the Wise.¹

The Eternal and the created triple worlds have been stated. Between the two triples is the Mahas; it is here called the link-world. It is called the fourth world, the Mahas, because it is above the triple world of ours, *bhuh*, *bhuvah*, *svah*. It stands between the two—between the higher triple world of the plenary Sat-Chit-Ananda above on the one hand and the lower triple on the other. It carries within it, above it, and one with it in a sense the higher triple, and it also releases the lower triple world through various agencies for the formation and perfection of the higher half—what is called Parardha—in terms of the lower, the created triple. Radically it is this world of the Mahas that is responsible for the lower triple creation and it is from this world that forces of manifestation of the Many are released and set to play to work out certain possibilities of the Immense Intelligence and power of the Spirit in the finite formations of the world-being and Force-movement. Because its centre is charged with the infinitude of Sat-Chit-Ananda, it is one with it Above; because its face is turned towards Manifestation, it is one with the Many that represent the self-limiting and self-conditioning attitude and capacity of the Supreme Spirit. Therefore it is the World which is a status of the Purusha where the Many is realised as a harmonised unit. Rightly then, this is called the Link-world for without it this triple creation is a truncated creature which could not hope to realise the Sat-Chit-Ananda in the Manifestation.

33. This triple world is an effect of the action, certainly, of this Agent—the Mahas (which stands) between the two triple worlds, the created and the uncreated.²

The verse is clear; but it must be understood that by the Agent is meant, the original Being and the Creative poise and mood for Manifestation. It must not be supposed that Mahas, the Agent, or the Creative Godhead is the agency for bringing about the darkness and suffering and imperfections of various sorts that are characteristic of the lower creation. They are the results of the workings of forces on the way, of many agencies that are formed or deformed for working out through the vicissitudes of darkness

¹ त्रैलोक्यस्येह भूरादेस्त्रैलोक्यस्य परस्य त्र ।

सन्धिलोको महर्लोकस्तुरीयः संस्मृतो बुधैः ॥३२॥

² कृताकृतकयोर्मध्ये द्वयोश्चापि त्रिरूपयोः ।

अनेनैव त्रिलोकीयं कर्त्तव्यं कार्यत्वमाश्रिता ॥३३॥

the desired results in the limited and finite and conditioned fields of imperfect Nature.

34. Which (the Mahas) shines manifesting the Glory of the One and the Many; it is here that the harmony of the One and Many is established.¹

The Glory lies in the fact that the One in manifesting the Many is not lost in it, but retains in it the co-ordinating principle by which the Many and each of the Many are rooted in the core, in the Central Unity. While each of the All is one and identical with the rest at the Radical Centre it is still different in formation from the rest, for the working out of the possibilities and is free in the field, in the Spirit-conditioned body of world-extension. Thus one can say that the Many is at once free and conditioned, free in its source and support and self-subsistence, conditioned for the purpose of the play, for the definite formulation of the Eternal principles of the Spirit in terms of Space-Time existence. This is the glory of the One and the Many, self-established in the fourth world with its natural and spontaneous unity embracing in the self-same identity the Many of the creative urge.

35. In the absence of the fourth world, Mahas, this triple world would be absolutely cut off from the Supreme Lord who is triple in aspect.²

The substance of the verse has been explained earlier while speaking of the Mahas as the Link-world. Here a reminder is made that the triple world of ours, whatever may be its form presented to us, whatever experience we may have of it, however imperfect and false and pervert and blind it may be in its construction and practical aspect, is still a derivation, a remote reflection, rather a refraction of the Supreme Lord denoted by the triple formula of Sat-Chit-Ananda.

36. The higher world eternal that is triune we call the Upper Half, *parārdha*, and this created triple world of the Lord, the lower Half, *aparārdha*.³

So far the character of the Higher Triple world and with it the world of Mahas and its status in the hierarchy of the sevenfold world-system has been noted. The following four verses proceed to give an idea of the

¹ नानात्वैकत्वयोः ख्यातिं भावयन्त्यो विराजते ।

नानात्वैकत्वसंवादोऽमुष्मिन् लोके प्रतिष्ठितः ॥३४॥

² तुरीयेऽसति लोकेऽस्मिन्मध्यमे मह्याह्वये

त्रिलोक्यत्यन्तभिन्ना स्यात्त्रिरूपात्परमेशितुः ॥३५॥

³ परलोकत्रयं नित्यं परार्धमिति कीर्त्यते ।

अपरार्धमिदं लोकत्रयं कृतकमीशितुः ॥३६॥

correspondences of the threefold principle in the Parardha and the Aparardha. And this correspondence is made possible as we have seen by the Mahas. It is not an abstract principle, but a world; not a world alone, but a world with its Lord; for it is He who is really the Sat-Chit-Ananda that is impregnated in the Mahas.

37. Between the two halves, there shines the Supreme Person, Purushotama, the Lord of the Mahas-world; Him the Wise call the Supramental Person, Vijñanamaya Purusha.¹

Vijñanamaya Purusha is a term taken from the Upanishads. It is used in a definite sense here to denote what is called in Sri Aurobindo's Teachings the Supermind *Vijñāna*. Even the latter English word does not merely mean the Mind par excellence, above the normal mind. It means all that has been spoken of the Mahas, the fourth term, *Vyāhriti*, of the world-system, with its corresponding status in the hierarchy of Consciousness. Ordinarily in latter Sanskrit and especially in philosophical works Vijñana is used as a synonym of Buddhi, intellect, as in the Vijñana-skandha of the Buddhists. But in the earlier texts terms are used with precision to denote certain categories of knowledge and things and their significances are lost to us and the same terms are used to connote things of knowledge which are different from those that were their original significances. Thus *Ajñāna*, *Sañjñāna*, *Vijñāna*, *Prajñāna*, *Jñāna* are all terms of profound psychological significance based upon direct perception of spiritual truths. It is sufficient to note that *Vijñāna*, the principle of the world of Mahas, is neither the intellect, buddhi, nor knowledge of the intellectual kind, the mind. It is Knowledge indeed, but Knowledge proper to a higher grade of the Spirit's Being in its Self-extension in the higher altitudes of Self-projection, a Knowledge immense with Power, or it is something that is at once Knowledge and Power or Knowledge that is Power. This is the Purusha, *Vijñānamaya*, the Supramental Person.

38. The Supreme Brahman is the Delight, it is called Prajnana, intense consciousness; it is the Ananda which includes the Upper Half of the Sphere of the worlds.²

The worlds and the principles from Ananda downwards are now mentioned. This creation of our triple world is immediately concerned with

¹ उभयोरर्धयोर्मध्ये राजन्तं पुरुषोत्तमम् ।

महर्लोकपतिं विज्ञा विज्ञानमयमूचिरे ॥३७॥

² आनन्दः परमं ब्रह्म प्रज्ञानमिति चक्षते ।

लोकत्रक्रपरार्धस्य यत्रान्तर्भव इष्यते ॥३८॥

the Mahas, the vaster world above that is next to it in this broad classification; the higher half, *parārdha*, (Jana, Tapas and Satya) is treated as one block, and for all practical purposes, it is included in one term, the Ananda which is next to the Mahas and with which the latter is charged through and through. The significance of the statement that Brahman is called *prajñāna* is this that it is the intense, concentrated, and in a sense the apprehending, Consciousness as distinct from the vast and comprehending Consciousness turned to the Manifestation, designated by the term *Vijnāna*—the Supermind of the Mahas world.

39. The fourth station *Vijnāna*, the supramental is called the Mahas by the Taittiriya school. The knowledge that pertains to the lower half of the world here is called the Pure Mind, *Manah*, of the nature of Svar.*

The *Vijnāna* principle that is proper to the world of Mahas is so termed by the sages of the Taittiriya school. For in that Upanishad a broad division of Brahman, the One, into several aspects is made, having in view its bearing on the practical side leading to the realisation of Brahman in those aspects. It will be more pertinent to state that the Upanishad begins with the statement that Matter is Brahman and ends with "Ananda, Delight is Brahman". In this scheme there are only five divisions, five principles and not seven. But that is reconciled by what we have stated already to the effect that the higher half is included in the Ananda and the explanation is also given. Now the Taittiriya Upanishad starts with an eye to the realisation of all Matter, *anna*, and in its extended sense, the Physical Universe as Brahman. Then, when all Matter is resolved into Force the latter's special and radical form, Life, as Brahman is placed before the seeker as the next immediate goal for realisation. It is not sheer force and blind energy that is life, *prāna*, which is realised as Brahman, but there is some intelligent principle in and behind Life called the Mind, *manah*, which is the driving power of Intelligence that is to be realised as Brahman. Beyond and above and further than the Mind is *Vijnāna*, the Supermind and the Ananda is still above. Thus when the Upanishad teaches that Matter *anna*, Life *prāna* which is subtler than Matter, Mind *manah* still subtler, and still further *Vijnāna* and Ananda—each is Brahman, it proceeds on an all-inclusive basis and the principle is applicable to the universal as well as to the individual. Applying the same to the individual person, later Vedantins discovered the truth of the five sheaths *Kośas*, and went on with the classification of bodies and states of consciousness corresponding to them. It does not

* तुरीयं धाम विज्ञानं तैत्तिरीयैर्महः स्मृतम् ।

अपरार्धगतं ज्ञानं मनः शुद्धं स्वरात्मकम् ॥३९॥

form part of our purpose to enter into a discussion of these classifications based on a different teaching for a definite purpose. Suffice it to say, that the Manas, the Mind-principle is the highest of the triple existence, Matter, Life and Mind that is developed and organised in man, while the Vijnana as we have envisaged it is not.

Now the Mind, as a Universal principle is the Pure Mind, which partakes of the substance and nature of what is called Svar, the topmost of the triple world of this lower creation.

40. Prana, Life is of the nature of *Bhuvar Loka*. Its nature is activity that pertains to the lower half; *Bhuh* is the world of Matter, the Inconscient, the terminus of this lower half of the World-system.¹

If Mind, the pure and luminous mind, represents the Svar and partakes of the substance and character of the third world, Life, Prana, is derived from and partakes of the substance of the middle world, *Bhuvah*. Then, the World of Matter, *annamaya loka*, is called the *Bhuh*; it is blind, the Inconscient, the boundary, downward limit of the descending hierarchy of consciousness (where it lapses) and the corresponding layers and fields of its activity.

41. Thus in sum is stated the course of the sevenfold world-system, a marvellous arrangement, variously constituted, that has issued from the Lord.²

An elaborate discussion of the seven principles of existence is not what is attempted here. The line of thought that will be helpful for a proper understanding of the unitary Existence in its relation to its own colourful Manifestation as the Cosmic Existence is all that is briefly mentioned here. And this conception will go a long way in loosening the rigidity of the intellectual mind and widening it out of its habitual groove into large vistas in the Cosmic Manifestation. That is a gain contributed to mental development and knowledge that can make way for a deeper and higher living in response to the luminous ideas of the Mind in the Spirit. We will have occasion again to make mention of these fundamental principles and their bearing on the practical aspect of the Life that is the aim of Sri Aurobindo's Teachings.

¹ भुवर्लोकात्मकः प्राणस्त्वपरार्धपरा क्रिया ।

भूरित्यन्नमयो लोकस्त्वपरार्धाविधिर्जडः ॥४०॥

² सक्षिङ्गप्यैवं समाख्याता लोकसप्तकधोरणी ।

विचित्रबन्धरचना विनिष्पन्नेयमीशितुः ॥४१॥

(to be continued)

T. V. KAPALI SASTRY

REVIEWS

Reconstruction of Humanity. By Prof. Pitrim A. Sorokin. Published by the Beacon Press, Boston.

The author is a scholar and original thinker of note. He is at present engaged in carrying out a research project of considerable importance at Harvard with the cooperation of a few young and eminent scholars. Though a Russian by birth, he has not looked at the big world problems through the lurid red glasses of the political fanatic. In fact, the book under review discloses its author to be a lover of humanity in the widest possible sense of the phrase. He has worked out a comprehensive plan, going deep down into the root of things, for deliverance of man from the dire consequences of his own past actions, and places it here in a non-technical form before the wider reading public of the world. The presentation is intensely attractive and appeals as much to the reader's intellectual understanding as to his emotions. The author pleads for the acceptance of his plan as a whole and warns us solemnly that any attempt at mere patching up will inevitably bring about new wars and other catastrophes, and will lead ultimately to an inglorious self-destruction terminating the creative career of humanity. We, who are humble followers of Sri Aurobindo's teachings, know that nothing short of a complete and integral transformation of man's being in all its parts, an enlightenment at the very core, will cure the malady that the world is suffering from. The Master has pointed out to us how this transformation, this enlightenment, can be brought about. We shall, later on, examine the remedies indicated by Prof. Sorokin in the light of our Yoga.

It is obvious on even a casual perusal of this book that the author is prescribing no quack remedy and that there is a background of careful technical research, almost German in its depth and intensity, behind every proposal that has been put forward. To say that the book is thought-provoking is to say too little. It conveys clearly enough to the intelligent reader the nature of the evidence relied on and the character of the researches that are being carried on by this keen eyed and large-hearted citizen of the world. The short prologue, entitled "The eternal quest continues", is a piece of brilliant literary effort, almost poetic in its fervour. It characterises the book thus: "Both—the criticism and the constructive suggestions—are offered in the humblest spirit with malice towards none and charity

for all." It is a very good thing that it is so, for the world has had its fill of the noisy clamours of narrow-minded politicians. There are certain basic facts which we must not lose sight of, if we wish to steer clear of the lures offered by charlatans and quacks. Every attempt that man has made at organising his social and political life carries in itself its own truth, for it is a step in the gradual evolution of his group life—extremely useful, nay, inevitable at a certain stage of development, but superfluous, even injurious, when that stage has passed away. Secondly, all egoism is a bar to progress, whether it is the egoism of the individual or of the group, when a certain stage of growth has been attained. The trend of human society has ever been towards the realisation of larger and larger, more and more complex, units of group-life, and, in the course of his history man has made various kinds of experiments in the organisation of his collective life—diverse forms of government and society. All these have had their utility. Clans and tribes, castes and classes, counties and duchies, kingdoms and empires, leagues and confederacies, each has played its part in its own setting of time and space. Today man is called upon to take a decisive step towards the achievement of a complete racial unity. The ideal has taken some shape in the human mind but is still vague and apt to be looked upon as chimerical by the *practical* man. Still man is ever moving towards this ideal—never attaining it because he has not yet realised that human unity, to be true and lasting, must be unity in God. Unity in God is a state that is attainable only by the Spirit. The rational mind can never realise it. Altruism is a transcendence of egoism, but the supremest unity has to surpass even this altruism.

Prof. Sorokin is not a worker in the darkness of Ignorance. In working out his plan he has not, like so many other writers of the West, ignored the Spirit. But it is not enough merely to acknowledge the existence of the Spirit. One must realise in oneself that God alone exists and that the world is God and nothing else—that an inherent unity in the Divine underlies the apparent diversity of creation. The New Age, that we are called upon to usher in, is an age in which men would realise this essential unity underlying apparent multiplicity.

To reconstruct humanity truly and for good, man, spiritually enlightened, must bring down and establish on earth the Supramental truth of divine oneness. This he can do only if he transcends the half-light of his mentality and becomes self-aware of the true truth of things. Such an achievement is possible, in the first instance, only for the select few who by the power of their Yoga have attained supramental enlightenment. Such is the teaching of Sri Aurobindo and in the light of this teaching we have to examine Prof.

Sorokin's plan of reshaping human life. In the ordinary course of evolution man is destined to transcend his present stage of mental rationalism. There is no reason whatsoever why the gradual growth of man and nature should stop at the intellect, which is at best but a half-lit faculty. Our author is undoubtedly conscious of all this. In part V where he outlines the great systems of the past devoted to the transfiguration of man he says that these older systems must be carefully studied and incorporated into modern systems. "In this way we can enrich our knowledge and skill in the field of the altruistic and creative transformation of man." Though the desired transformation is not called supramental in express language, still it appears to us pretty clear that the change visualised belongs to a plane well above the mental. The words—"a series of epoch-making discoveries and inventions will be forthcoming in this field. Together with the existing wisdom and skill, they will enable mankind to perform its own self-transfiguration in the noblest, easiest and most effective way"—clearly indicates the author's meaning.

The course pursued by man so far has, in spite of the advent of a series of spiritual supermen, precipitated crises. Says the author, "Since our sensate culture no longer possesses any fundamental values capable of commanding the allegiance of mankind, an ever-growing number...are looking for some...way out of the blind alley, for a new order to supplant the old one." In planning this new drive the learned professor has brought into full use his profound knowledge of history and politics, as well as his deep insight into the lives of the spiritually great figures of the past. The wide range of material that he has passed under review would be apparent even from a glance at the index. The subject of reconstructing man's life and giving it a new orientation is of such vital interest that it would be well worth our while reviewing the book at some length for our readers.

A significant fact is that it has been dedicated to "the deathless Mohandas K. Gandhi." This dedication does not imply the author's attachment to any particular creed that the Mahatma stood for. The true meaning is that the author has definitely stepped out of the narrow limits of his western outlook and is prepared to give full consideration to all human points of view. In the fourteenth chapter, we find the methods and technique of Raja Yoga and those of the great Christian monastic orders of the Middle Ages analysed and discussed. The spiritual attainments of the ancient Hindu Masters, the Sufi teachers of Persia and the saints and mystics of Mediaeval Europe have been all brought under review. A brief quotation from page 220 shows clearly the attitude of the professor towards those great souls of the past.

"They indeed subordinated themselves, their bodies, minds, activities and lives to this superconscious absolute value. They became indeed its mere mouthpieces and instrumentalities. All their egos were united into one superconscious self...An undisturbed peace of mind, a complete insulation from all fear, doubt, apprehension, desire, even against death, is their habitual state...This result suggests that their teachings for that purpose have also been sound, efficacious and therefore scientific." The author points out that the secret of the success of these great ones is their rule: a complete submission of all values, norms, goals and egos to an Absolute value—a state of union with the Divine.

Many old schools of Yoga associated this superconscious state with a total abstention from all mundane action. But, as the readers of this journal know very well, the goal set before us by Sri Aurobindo is a divine life, a life of divine action, of action purged of all egoism and flowing out of truth-consciousness. Prof. Sorokin is acquainted with Sri Aurobindo's "Life Divine" as would appear from the footnote on p. 219. One is not surprised to find that he speaks of "the liberated energies of the superconscious" and says, "All that is necessary is the supreme mobilization of our mental and moral forces, control of subconscious drives by the conscious and superconscious factors, and unflinching determination to meet courageously all the difficulties of the pilgrimage."

An author who has so completely transcended the influence of the material outlook of the West enforces our admiration. That he is engaged in working out his great plan, at least half spiritual, in one of the exclusive intellectual centres of a self-satisfied America, and that the Lilly Foundation of Harvard is assisting him, inspire us with great hope. There is nothing astonishing in a Russian thinker looking at life from the mystic point of view of old Asia, but it is indeed a remarkable pointer of the direction that modern thought is taking, that the most materially minded people on the face of the globe should be associated with the quest of this Russian, who boldly proclaims that "these older systems, their principles and techniques largely neglected today, must be carefully studied and incorporated into modern systems, revising these in several respects."

Before we proceed to acquaint our readers with the general argument of the book under review we shall very briefly take note of one or two important points that occur to us. It is just possible that the goal aimed at by the author would on a cursory reading of his book appear to be prevention of devastating wars between nation and nation. Surely it is not enough merely to prevent open war. It is often said, and not without reason, that periods of peace are but periods of preparation for the next war. What

is really wrong is man's state of consciousness, his eagerness to do his neighbour down, to circumvent him and ameliorate one's own condition. It is this disease that has to be prevented. Our author understands this fully, but appears to lay too much stress on mere abstention from warfare. It is, however, very easy to understand that one nation can kill another as effectively by economic weapons as by bombs and big guns. The difference is one of speed. Likewise a free supply of gin has in the past very effectively cleared a country, in a few short decades, of undesirable aboriginal people. The real evil then is the hate in the mind of men and not overt bloodshed. It is a cleansing of his mind, an enlightenment, a realisation of the divinity inherent in everybody and everything that can totally and effectively reshape the world. This point might have been brought out more trenchantly.

Another thing we would like to emphasise. The realisation of the Divine in all beings, so essential to the success of any plan of reconstruction, can never be brought about by a mental or moral effort. It belongs to an entirely higher plane—a plane attainable by Yoga alone. A Yogic realisation presupposes discipline, concentration, meditation, adoration and a variety of other subtle methods. The author has not missed this point, but he has not laid sufficient stress on the practice of Yoga as something indispensable to success. The Supermind is the thing we must get on to, if we wish to transfigure human life. There is nothing vague or nebulous about this state; it is clear and precise, and is attainable by precise methods. Likewise, the application of supramental knowledge to the solution of our mundane problems is a definite, precise process. Something of this, perhaps a special chapter, might be a desirable addition to this book in a later edition.

Our purpose of unfolding to the general reader the author's method of approach and the remedy proposed by him would be best served by a rapid survey of the general plan of the book. We have already referred to the prologue. The book itself is divided into six parts entitled:— (1) Quack cures for war and impotent plans for peace; (2) Insufficient facts of altruism; (3) Cultural factors of altruism and egoism; (4) Social factors of altruism and egoism; (5) Personal factors of creative altruism; (6) Ways of realisation of the plan. Each part, again, is subdivided into several chapters. Going over all these would be a disproportionately long affair. But if we cast a cursory glance over the subdivisions of the first part, we shall comprehend how deep the author has gone in working out his plan of a new order. Chapter I is headed "Political cures", and includes separate sections on Democracy. The second chapter is entitled "Economic cures and plans", and includes Capitalism as well as Communist, Fascist and Socialist Economics. The third chapter deals with Scientific, Educational, Religious and other cures

and plans. It includes on the one hand, Religion, and on the other Scientific discoveries and technological inventions. The conclusion of this first part is full of meaning:— “It should now be quite clear that none of the foregoing plans can assure peace. Taken alone, they are either fallacious or inadequate. Their principal defect is that they either neglect the decisive factor of altruism and love...or are unable to make the overt behaviour of persons and groups...more altruistic than they are now.”

The author looks forward to a substantial increase of love, sympathy and free cooperation in overt relationships as the remedy for our present ills. But this love, sympathy and free cooperation, to be true and lasting, must be based principally on a realisation of Divine oneness. The last two parts of the book contain many passages, as we have shown already, that support this view. But let the support be more explicit in a later edition of the book. Even as it is, we welcome Prof. Sorokin's plan of reconstruction. It has behind it a clear vision of human history and human psychology and an intuitive understanding of the trend of evolution. Only let it be clear that man's altruism must proceed from a dynamic realisation that “All is the Divine”, that every action is a movement of the Divine.

C. C. DUTT

Srimad Bhagavad Gita—With the Gloss of Sridhara Swami. Published by Swami Vireswarananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapur, Madras. Price Rs. 7/-

It has been suggested that not only non-Hindus but also most Hindus feel the real need for a “Compendium” or “Concordance” presenting in a short compass the substance of Hindu scriptures. The absence of such a text-book, it is said, is due to the fact that Hindu religion is extremely comprehensive and catholic and is not a proselytising one. The Theosophical Society has published certain books aiming at the presentation of Hinduism in a nutshell. Some years ago, the question, ‘Who is a Hindu?’ was raised and discussed in the Indian Press led by the late C. Y. Chintamani, of the Allahabad Leader. Prominent Hindus of the English-knowing section contributed their opinions, which were later published in book form by the late G.A. Natesan. That was a compendium, but the opinions differed. What we want, it is said, is a text-book on the essentials of Hinduism published under the authority of the Acharyas or Mathadipatis

as well as of scholars. It should be of use to non-Hindus who want to know the essential aspects of Hindu scriptures, and should be acceptable to all sections of Hindus so that it may unify them. But Hinduism has had a long history, and this is not the first time that such a necessity has been felt. The last authoritative compilation of the essentials of Hinduism is to be found in the Gita. "The Gita is a book that has worn extraordinarily well and it is almost as fresh and still in its real substance quite as new, because always renewable in experience, as when it first appeared in or was written into the frame of the Mahabharata....Its influence is not merely philosophic or academic but immediate and living, an influence both for thought and action, and its ideas are actually at work as a powerful shaping factor in the revival and renewal of a nation and a culture." (*Essays on the Gita* by Sri Aurobindo). We wonder why those who want a text book on the essentials of Hinduism did not think of this great book. No conference of Acharyas and Mohants of the present day can produce anything more authoritative than the Gita which for many centuries has been accepted as an authoritative scripture by all denominations and sects of the Hindus. And if non-Hindus have to be given a knowledge of Hinduism in a nutshell, there can be nothing better than the Gita for that purpose. From this point of view the publication of the book under review has been very apt and timely. There are innumerable commentaries on the Gita, but they are all fundamentally based on the famous *bhasya* of Shankaracharya. But that *bhasya* is too scholarly and elaborate for the ordinary reader, so Sridhara prepared a gloss which is concise and lucid. It is called *subodhini* and it is really so. The editors have given a faithful translation of the gloss with occasional notes of their own. The book is an ideal popular edition for those who want to understand the Gita as interpreted by Shankara. The get up of the book is very attractive.

But the crucial question is, did Shankara himself give a true interpretation of the Gita? It may seem to be too late to raise such a question, as Shankara's commentary has been accepted in India as the most authoritative for more than a thousand years, and it has profoundly influenced Indian thought and culture. But if we can free our mind from all bias and compare the simple straightforward text of the Gita with the commentary of Shankara, we cannot fail to see how in numerous places he has read his own thoughts into the Gita. As in some fundamental points the view of Shankara is diametrically opposite to that of the Gita, Shankara has had great difficulty to give an interpretation that would agree with his own view. A few examples, taken almost at random, will illustrate our point.

It is Shankara's view that in order to attain the highest goal, one must

practise *jñāna yoga* and that should be preceded by renunciation of work which is absolutely incompatible with knowledge. According to him, only a person who does this is a true yogin and a sannyasi. The opening sloka of the sixth chapter of the Gita is a complete contradiction of this view. Indeed it is to combat this tendency towards renunciation of life and work seen in that age that the Gita gave its own interpretation of sannyasa and yoga. As Sridhara has pointed out in his gloss, Sannyasa was established as the highest state of manhood; thus it is said in Maha Narayan Upanishad: 'Sannyasa alone excels everything.' The Gita accepted this but gave its own interpretation that one can be a true sannyasi and a yogi while doing all works in the world, *sarvakarmani*. Shankara revives the idea of world-renunciation to combat which the Gita was preached, and had to resort to all sorts of devices to show that the Gita really supported his view. He had to interpret the Gita in his own way as by that time the Gita was established as an authoritative text-book on Vedanta, which was the basis of Indian spirituality and culture. The long commentary he had to write to explain away the simple meaning of the first sloka of the sixth chapter illustrates very well the text-twisting device of commentators about which Vivekananda said: "The Advaitic commentators, whenever an Advaitic text comes, preserves it just as it is, but the same commentator, as soon as a Dualistic text presents itself, tortures it if he can, and brings the most queer meaning out of it.... In the same way, if not in a still worse fashion, the texts are handled by the Dualistic commentators. Every Dualistic text is preserved, and every text that speaks of non-dualistic philosophy is tortured in any fashion he likes." In this respect, Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Gita is unique. He has his own philosophy and yoga which are not in every respect identical with those of the Gita, still he has nowhere brought them in when interpreting the Gita's teaching.

Here is a simple translation of the first sloka of the sixth chapter:

"Whoever does the work to be done without resort to its fruits, he is the Sannyasin and the Yogin, not the man who lights not the sacrificial fire and does not the works." The Gita has left no doubt whatsoever here that a true sannyasin does not give up works, but only attachment to the fruits of works. This goes against the orthodox view of Sannyasa accepted by Shankara, and therefore he has explained it away by saying that a Sannyasi must of course give up work, but that alone is not sufficient. According to him, the Gita calls a Karmoyogin a Sannyasin and Yogin only to praise karma as a means of purification by which one can attain knowledge and thus become a *paramārtha* or true Sannyasin who must give up work. Sridhara in his gloss accepts the interpretation of Shankara in his own

way. He sees, what Shankara did not see, the danger of preaching the ideal of renunciation of work indiscriminately. Thus Sridhara says in his gloss on this sloka: "Even though the mind be purified, yet without meditation Liberation cannot result from mere renunciation of action; hence the Yoga of meditation is expounded in this sixth chapter. In order to explain in detail the Yoga referred to in brief at the end of the last chapter, the sixth chapter is begun. As the practice of knowledge preceded by renunciation of action has been depicted there as the main theme in the verses beginning with, "The self-controlled, embodied being, renouncing all actions through his mind" etc. (V. 13), and as performance of work is painful, lest one should commit the mistake of suddenly renouncing action, the Blessed Lord, in order to prevent such a contingency, said, praising the way of action as superior to renunciation, in the two verses (Vi 1,2) etc." The reader will see how Shankara's interpretation has frustrated the clear intention of the Gita. No doubt the sixth chapter expounds the practice of meditation; but in order to prevent any misunderstanding that the Gita is preaching the ideal of quietist sannyasa, in the very first sloka it states what it means by true sannyasa. The Gita clearly says that Karmayoga is true sannyasa, but as Karmayoga must be based on the knowledge of the Self, in this chapter the Gita gives the method of meditation by which the jñanayogin attains to self-knowledge. This method is briefly stated towards the end of the previous chapter, but that chapter also is concluded by saying that it is the Divine who is the enjoyer of all sacrifice and tapasya, thus showing clearly that it is not the intention of the Gita to preach the renunciation of action.

Shankara felt that his interpretation was weak, so he has brought all sorts of extraneous considerations to support it. Thus he says that it has been laid down in Sruti, Smriti, Purana and Itihasa that a *paramārtha* sannyasi, that is a true sannyasi, gives up work and renounces the world; the Lord in the Gita cannot certainly say anything which goes against those scriptures. So his words have to be so interpreted as not to contradict those scriptures. So the true meaning of the sloka is that as long as the householder is not fit for taking the path of meditation, he should not renounce action which will purify his being and make him fit. Feeling that this argument also is not convincing, he says that any other interpretation would contradict the Lord's own statements in other places of the Gita itself. He quotes several such statements. He puts special reliance on the following sloka "The embodied soul perfectly controlling its nature, having renounced all its action by the mind, sits serenely in its nine-gated city neither doing nor causing to be done."

Here Shankara ignores the words "by the mind" which signify that the renunciation of action is not outward but inward; that is, one has not to give up outward action, but has to realise that it is Prakriti which does all action, Purusha, the self, is only the witness and not the doer. Shankara quotes the following passages of the Gita as upholding the *sannyasa asram*; "*maumi samtusto yena kenacit*", "*a-niketah sthiramatir*", "*vihāya kaman yah sarvan pumans carati nih-sprihaḥ*" "*sarv-ārambha-parityāgi*". But these passages of the Gita do not really advocate the *sannyasa asram* as is claimed by Shankara. Throughout the book the Gita has laid stress on action and playing one's part in the world. The last question of Arjuna, in the first sloka of the 18th chapter, demands a final and clear distinction between the outer and inner renunciation, *Sannyasa* and *Tyaga*. "The frequent harping, the reiterated emphasis of the Gita on the crucial distinction" says Sri Aurobindo, "has been amply justified by the subsequent history of the later Indian mind, its constant confusion of these two very different things and its strong bent towards belittling any activity of the kind taught by the Gita as at best only a preliminary to the supreme inaction of *Sannyasa*. As a matter of fact, when people talk of *Tyaga*, of renunciation, it is always the physical renunciation of the world which they understand by the word or at least on which they lay emphasis while the Gita takes absolutely the opposite view that the real *Tyaga* has action and living in the world as its basis and not a flight to the monastery, the cave or the hill top. The real *Tyaga* is action with a renunciation of desire and that too is the real *Sannyasa*." (*Essays on the Gita*)

In the last chapter the Gita restates the body of its message in the short space of fifteen verses (49-64). "The statement sets out from the original starting-point of the book, the enigma of human action, the apparently insuperable difficulty of living in the highest self and spirit while yet we continue to do the works of the world. The easiest way is to give up the problem as insoluble, life and action as an illusion or an inferior movement of existence to be abandoned as soon as we can rise out of the snare of the world into the truth of spiritual being. That is the ascetic solution, if it can be called a solution; at any rate it is a decisive and effective way out of the enigma, a way to which ancient Indian thought of the highest and most meditative kind, as soon as it commenced to turn at a sharp incline from its first large and free synthesis, had moved always with an increasing preponderance. The Gita like the Tantra and on certain sides the later religions, attempts to preserve the ancient balance; it maintains the substance and foundation of the ancient synthesis, but the form has been changed and renovated in the light of a developing spiritual experience. This teaching

does not evade the difficult problem of reconciling the full active life of man with the inner life in the highest self and spirit; it advances what it holds to be the real solution. It does not at all deny the efficacy of the ascetic renunciation of life for its own purpose, but it sees that that cuts instead of loosening the knot of the riddle and therefore it accounts it an inferior method and holds its own for the better way.

"In the first five of these verses (49-53) the Gita so phrases its statement that it shall be applicable to both the way of the inner and the way of the outer renunciation and yet in such a manner that one has only to assign to some of their common expressions a deeper and more inward meaning in order to get the sense and thought of the method favoured by the Gita. The difficulty of human action is that the soul and nature of man seem fatally subjected to many kinds of bondage, the prison of ignorance, the meshes of the ego, the chain of the passions, the hammering insistence of the life of the moment, an obscure and limited circle without an issue. How, while absorbed and continually forced outward by the engrossing call of its active nature is it to get back to its real self and spiritual existence? The ascetic renunciation and the way of the Gita are both agreed that it must first of all renounce this absorption, must cast from it the external solicitation of outward things and separate silent self from active nature; it must identify itself with the immobile spirit and life in the silence. It must arrive at an inner inactivity, *naïskarmya*. It is therefore this saving passivity that the Gita puts here as the first object of its Yoga, the first necessary perfection in it or Siddhi. An understanding without attachment in all things, a soul self-conquered and empty of desire, man attains by renunciation a supreme perfection of *naiskarmya*. (18/49)." Thus we understand, how Shankara can pick out words and phrases from here and there to show that the Gita advocates outward *sannyasa* and renunciation of the world and work. But in two decisive slokas even here the Gita indicates its own thought. When one has realised the silent self and become Brahman, "he comes to know Me (the Purushottama) by devotion. And by doing also all actions always lodged in Me he attains by my grace the eternal and imperishable status." Thus according to the Gita the silent Brahman is not the highest status of Reality which has silence and activity as its two aspects, and the perfect man also when he attains to the highest perfection has the inner passivity and silence of the silent self but outwardly does all action as an instrument of the supreme Divine.

Shankara took the words *mauni* etc. from the nineteenth sloka of the twelfth chapter to show that the Gita advocates *sannyasa asram*. But the whole sloka is a description of a man who is devoted to the Purushottama

and is dear to him. A sannyasin who is absorbed in the silent Brahman has no relation with any divine personality. The Gita advocates silence both as a discipline for quieting the troubled nature and also as the inner spiritual state of the perfected man, it does not imply outward renunciation of all relations and activities in the world. From the word *carati* used in sloka 71 of the second chapter, Shankara concludes that the Gita advocates the life of the *parivrājaka* or sannyasi. But that is obviously a forced and far-fetched interpretation. The sloka can be literally translated thus: "Who abandons all desires and lives and acts free from longing, who has no "I" or "mine" (who has extinguished his ego in the One and lives in that unity), he attains to the great peace." That is the Gita's description not of the sannyasin but of the spiritual man living and acting in the world. *Aniketa* does not mean homeless, but a man who is not attached to anything as belonging to his egoistic personality. That is made clear in the following slokas: "A firm removal of the natural being's attraction to the senses, a radical freedom from egoism, absence of clinging to the attachment and absorption of family and home, *a-saktir an-abhiṣvaṅgaḥ putra-dārāgrhādiṣu*—that is declared to be the knowledge, all against it is ignorance." (13/9-12). Thus according to the Gita, the man of knowledge is he who gives up absorbing attachment to family and home; this is inner sannyasa and not outer.

It is the powerful influence of Shankara which prevented the people of India from understanding the Gita's reconciliation of spirituality and life; his insistence on the illusoriness of the world and the falsity of Karmayoga, *mithyājñānahetukaḥ karmayogaḥ*, as he says contradicting the whole spirit of the Gita, that made the Indians lose all interest in life and action with what result we know. If the life-giving teaching of the Gita is again to be propagated, we must keep the interpretation of Shankara only for students of the history of philosophy and turn to some other interpretation which will help us to "distinguish its essential and living message, that in it on which humanity has to seize for its perfection and its highest spiritual welfare."

A. B.

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with the motto "Great is Truth and it shall prevail" stands wholly above political partizanship, and sees all issues, political and cultural, from the standpoint of India's real spirit and genius. India is more than a collection of human beings. India is a living race-entity. You cannot make a nation with a mere aggregate of individuals possessing certain common characteristics. A nation is a single being. The sense of India the Great Mother is what we are aiming to kindle everywhere in this country. But to kindle this sense is not to answer the whole need of the times. The predominant characteristic of the Indian genius is its instinct of divinity. The Godhead secret within earth's life: that is the truth of man and most keenly the truth of the Indian nation, the truth that has to be lived out as much as possible if we are to fulfil our destiny and be to the world a source of illumination.

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